WHITE TRAIL'S END

THEODORE VON ZIEKURSCH

Far North Lumbering Life, Full of Thrilling Adventures

White Trail's End

By THEODORE VON ZIEKURSCH

Here is a rare story of romance and daring adventure in the Far North.

A young woman, interested in humane work, with large business interests in the Northern lumber districts, goes to help the poor people, mostly half-breeds, who there exist.

She would raise them from their low estate, with education and hope of betterment for their children.

Such was Edith Mason's purpose.

There also was John Stewart, a lover of nature; he preferred the solitude of the forest, and also he had interest in the humbe dwellers.

This man the young woman regarded as a sinister, evil influence, actuated by selfish purposes. So she fought him resolutely.

Not understanding her real purpose, he fought back. Then two strong natures clashed.

Read this thrilling story to learn how they each discovered the real purpose of the other; how they joined forces against the sordid ones of the timber agents.

A blood-stirring story of the great Northland.

Harry Ellertsen

White Trail's End

WHITE TRAIL'S END

By THEODORE VON ZIEKURSCH

A. L. BURT COMPANY

Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with Macrae-Smith Company

Printed in U. S. A.

COPYRIGHT · 1926 · BY
MACRAE · SMITH · COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

MANUFACTURED
IN THE U. S. A.

White Trail's End

CHAPTER I

EDITH MASON walked slowly up the shelving bank of the river toward the trading post building where the Independent Company reared the nucleus about which the town of Black House had grown. Her companion was a tall man of heavy build and reddish countenance. His light hair and blue eyes were of a northern race and there was something about him that told of slow, methodical efficiency.

In a sense, Carlson, superintendent of the Rodgers Lumber Company's mills, which were located on the river twenty miles below Black House, was sponsoring her introduction to the wilderness. Those mills were partly her own. Her father and Samuel Rodgers had owned them together and now the half interest in them with the vast areas of timber belonged to her mother and herself.

Seventy-five miles below the mills was the railroad and Carlson had sent two of the rivermen down there to bring her up here to Black House where the real purpose of her invasion of the wilderness

would start. In a vague fashion she had always known about this region and now she was seeing it all. That long canoe trip up the river from the railroad had afforded an opportunity for adjustments. Her anticipation of the mills had ended in a disappointment. The mental picture had never been clear but she'd expected greater things, huge smokestacks, immense lumber piles and picturesque lumberjacks. Of course, it didn't matter, but it was disappointing to find the mills that were so valuable nothing but ugly board buildings and sheds with a boom in the river to catch the logs. She had only stopped there a short while and then came on in the big canoe with Carlson and the two rivermen to Black House.

This was the frontier. From here the way would lead on to that task which she had imposed upon herself with an eager zeal. Here was the last hold of civilization as she accepted it. The post building was a full hundred yards back from the river on a higher, sandy level like a terrace where the flood waters would not reach. Rodgers was also a part owner of the Independent Trading Company which had established this post called Black House years before.

Her thoughts ran swiftly back now to the origin of the impulse that had led her here. She saw herself as she had been in the city, interested with her

mother in settlement work, in neighborhood houses, in bringing cheer and new vistas of life to the slums, the alleys of humanity. Such work always had lured her and then had come this wider opportunity. At least, it seemed wider. Samuel Rodgers had told her of it. He'd been her father's partner and together they'd made a fortune out of the lumber from those interminable miles of forest. She respected Rodgers and liked him. His interest in her work had always been a kindly one but she really had been surprised when he told her of his own growing impulses along such lines. In the far northwest were a people he'd come in contact with through the mills, a crude people he'd felt a desire to do something for. Her surprise was occasioned by the fact that he found time for such digressions from business.

He'd told her more about them. There was a small settlement, not a town, rather a group of people who lived along the river perhaps a hundred and fifty miles above Black House. That was no great distance in these vast reaches of wilderness. They were a rough, ignorant people, working for the lumber companies and trapping, living close to the earth with no more opportunity for the sons than the fathers had known. Rodgers had pictured them for her, many of them with the blood of the natives strong in their veins, a strange mixture of races, virile but

undeveloped. He'd tried to do things for them. Their lands were of little value, only the timber possessing any worth, and he'd offered to take those lands off their hands and furnish good farming lands in the valleys in exchange, to lend the aid of his wealth in moving them and establishing them anew in regions where they could prosper agriculturally. It was unthinkable but they had refused. Rather, there was a man named Stewart who dominated them. He had refused for them and they feared him.

As Rodgers had described the overbearing rule of this man and the conditions of those who lived under his sway indignation and rebellion had grown within her. It had been a challenge and she had dared to take it up. She would go to them, she would teach them, would lead them gradually to understanding that it was not meant for men to do other than progress, she would make them see that to their children and the children of their children they owed every opportunity for advancement. After all, some of them had worked to help create the wealth that was hers. There was a personal appeal.

Rodgers had been glad to offer her every aid. He really was proud of trying to do something for the betterment of humanity. It would cost a good deal but he would give them rich farming lands. Perhaps the timber on the hills they now owned might reim-

burse him to some extent but that did not matter. He was eager to be of help.

That was the motive which had brought Edith Mason here into the wilderness. Now she was at Black House, within a hundred and fifty miles of the battleground of her new endeavor. Black House was to be her base. She was halfway from the river bank to the post building and she walked slowly, looking about.

The river was wide between low, shelving banks. There was a landing built of heavy logs laid out from shore and supported by other heavy logs at an angle to the bank to prevent the break-up of the ice from sweeping it away. At the landing a small, side-wheel river boat of the wood burning variety was tied up. Here and there on the river were canoes while four natives were busied with a fishing net across a cove. A tiny church reared its clapboard belfry some distance behind the post building.

Pariah sledge dogs rambled at will in quest of food. The few buildings that constituted the town were grouped loosely over a considerable area. They were mainly of crudely finished logs and slabs, a few windows, here and there an effort to beautify with a low porch. There was no regularity, no streets, merely well-worn paths leading to the various buildings and the landing. Black House was a frontier town, a

town that had grown as others in the north where the wilderness had found need of a metropolis. The post building was the center from which all activity radiated. There was a small machine shop that served the needs of the lumber camps below and the occasional miners as well as the one river boat of the post which carried the furs down to the railroad and brought the trade goods up.

But Black House was enterprising. There was a municipal power plant that furnished enough electricity for a few of the more pressing needs. There was pride in that power plant which was conducted in conjunction with the machine shop. It had been rigged up when the engine of a steam launch that was crushed in the break-up of the river a year before had been salvaged.

On a flat some distance above the town a dozen tepees formed an Indian encampment and naked children ran about while the men lazed indolently in the sun. Wolfish looking dogs kept scrupulously out of the way of all chance contact with sticks and wandered from drying rack to drying rack where whitefish and salmon hung out of reach. Occasionally one howled or leaped vainly to snap at the inviting fish. Now the summer was on and the time of hunger for them. In winter they were worked and had to be fed, but now it was a case of each foraging for himself. A little

longer and all would take to the bush to prey on the rabbits and ground squirrels or even larger game.

An Indian woman with a small child barely old enough to walk was going down toward the river and stopped to stare, wide-eyed. Edith Mason smiled but there was no response.

Somehow, it all seemed familiar. It was all new and intensely interesting but it was as she had expected. She recognized all the details as Rodgers had described the town to her. Those log houses with their stone chimneys were picturesque. There were little patches of gardens and piles of rough firewood. At one end of the cabins Edith saw a white woman and a child but unmistakably this was a land for men. Edith felt that she knew the life of these people. That white woman was the wife of the Scot who conducted the machine shop and was engineer and captain of the sturdy little river boat which supplied the needs of the post. But the small population of Black House was cosmopolite, a few French trappers whose lines were comparatively near in the forest and who had settled here at the post, some of their wives with mixed blood; the Reverend Macungie, rector of the tiny church, a lean, strong man who had spent the major portion of a lifetime administering to the spiritual and physical needs of men in the wilderness; a half dozen families of those men who worked

at the lumbering operations down the river, stock of northern Europe, Scots and the French Canadians. Added to these were the Indians, wandering tribesmen who came and went, arriving in numbers in the spring to trade the winter's catch of furs. Out of the silent wilderness they came by canoe, whole families of them with their dogs to make a ceremony of the trading, to tell of the misfortune or illness or starvation that had overtaken some during the long winter, to dwell on the luck of the traps, to feast on the flour and canned fruits obtained at the post. During those days it was a scene of bustle and activity. In the trading room Jim Hedges, the Factor, judged the worth of the furs and continually admonished against extravagance, advising the childlike red trappers to leave as much of the value of the furs as possible to their credit with the company for the winter's needs. Then there were ceremonials and dances; they had conquered the winter and the north at its worst; it was a time for happiness. Soon they would fade back into the depths; much of the bustle would disappear and by midsummer Black House would be normal again, a tiny settlement in the wilderness that was close on all sides. Throughout the autumn there would be a slight revival as occasional trappers came for ammunition or supplies or the new traps that were constantly needed.

Edith Mason understood it as Rodgers had pictured it and Carlson had told her more on the way up-river. It was the old, old story of man's fight against the wilderness. First there had been a small fishing encampment of Indians which offered opportunities for trade. Then came the post building, and man is eager for the company of man. Some few of those whites who worked for the lumber companies and the trappers had settled here. Black House had grown to its present state, a straggling frontier post of the river.

Carlson interrupted Edith's thoughts as they neared the post building, an oblong structure of logs, perhaps forty feet in length and a third as wide.

"You'll like Hedges, Miss Mason. He's been Factor here since the post was established fifteen years ago. I suppose Mr. Rodgers has told you about him."

Edith smiled.

"Yes," she said and looked toward the open doorway of the post building where a man of medium height with gray hair and pleasantly keen blue eyes appeared. At sight of the approaching girl and her companion Jim Hedges, veteran Factor of Black House post, came out.

"I been expecting you, Miss Mason, and I'm right almighty glad to see you."

Edith Mason held out her hand and then followed

Hedges inside the post building. The trading room was long. There was a huge fireplace at one end and the room was cut off at the other end by a rough slab counter behind which were shelves laden with boxes of cartridges, rifle cases, traps, a few axes and sheath knives, some blankets and bolts of cloth and a varied assortment of trade goods. There was also a door that led into the other half of the building where Hedges had living quarters in the storeroom among bales and boxes, canvas flour sacks and stacks of canned goods.

The pride of Hedges in his establishment was plain as he showed Edith about and described the trade and people, but there was a subdued eagerness to question her, a naively direct wonderment on the part of the old Factor that one such as she should leave the life of the city to invade the wilderness with all its harshness.

"I got a letter from Mr. Rodgers that you're to have anything you want from the post," Hedges said, "and we'll be right almighty glad to help any way we can, Miss Mason. It'll be comfortable to know you can fall back on us when you're up there."

"Tell me about it," Edith said. "Ever since Mr. Rodgers told me of those people and of how they live without churches and without schools for the children or anything to make life worth while I've been

eager to go up to them. We call ourselves Christians and yet often we know about such things and let them continue without trying to help. From what Mr. Rodgers said they are like animals in the way they live and this man Stewart must be responsible for the worst of it. He was the one who prevented them from accepting the offer of Mr. Rodgers to give them farm lands in exchange for their worthless hills. Why do they submit to him? Are they as much afraid of him as Mr. Rodgers said? What a brute he must be."

Edith shuddered slightly and her mouth was tight-lipped. A hundred and fifty miles up the river from Black House was the battleground of her choosing. Her purpose was strong and she told Hedges and Carlson of it. Victory could only come when she lifted the domination of Stewart from those people among whom he lived, when she established a school where their children could come to her, a Sunday School and even a church, when she succeeded in teaching them that there were better things in life than they knew in the wilderness. Through the weeks it had become a dream of achievement to her that could only end when those people whom she had never seen threw off the yoke of this man named Stewart, when they came to accept the generous offers of help and left the isolation of their mountain wilder-

ness to come down into the world and live like human beings where future generations could take their part in the cycle of usefulness. Now she was on the threshold of it all and she wanted to know more. Neither Hedges nor Carlson had answered her questions.

"Who is Stewart? What is his hold upon them?" she asked. "Where did he come from?"

Carlson looked at the Factor and Hedges spoke.

"He's always lived up there. His father came in and built a post there long ago. There wasn't much trade and when he died Stewart closed it up but stayed there himself. He was born right there. Of course there ain't no town like we have here at Black House; only some Indians like there was before Stewart's father came in, and some Scotch and French trappers and half bloods. It's like a little settlement, a cabin here and there, maybe a half dozen families with white blood spread over a couple of miles in the hills by the river, and some Indians. That's the way settlements is up in this country, Miss Mason. It's the same all over the north. I used to work for the Bay Company before Mr. Rodgers and the Independent Company opened this post here at Black House and made me Factor. There wasn't nobody here, but the Indians used to come in the spring and fall because it was a good fishing place. If this post

was to be abandoned Black House wouldn't hold together long. Some of the folks that live here would drift away and soon there'd be just a little scattered settlement like the one Stewart's holding together up there on the river where you're going."

"But why do they remain there when they could have left and had the farms that Mr. Rodgers was willing to give them in exchange?" Edith asked.

Hedges looked toward Carlson and was hesitant. At last he spoke in slow fashion.

"Well, I guess maybe they can't figure no other homes, and they don't know much about farming. Besides, Stewart made them take out homestead rights and he won't let them give up those rights."

"They're afraid of Stewart, Mr. Rodgers says," the girl interrupted. "How can he prevent them from going away if they want to?"

Hedges shrugged his shoulders and his eyes were steady on the girl.

"I don't know, but he seems to be doing it. Maybe they don't want to go away. Some of them come down here to trade and they don't seem to be right almighty anxious about getting away."

"Mr. Rodgers says the same thing and he believes that's because Stewart has talked against it and told them falsehoods about being cheated if they accept the farm lands. It will be a wonderful thing if I

can break that all down and show them that we are their friends and want to help them, if we can wean them away from Stewart. It's the kind of thing I've dreamed about doing, a worth while and Christian thing. Think of their children and their children's children. Think what it will mean to them to be able to advance in the world and become enlightened instead of living up there in the woods like savages."

Hedges moved uncomfortably and there was something more than met the eye in the glance he cast Carlson.

"I'm terribly eager to get up there," Edith went on. "I wish I could go on to-day but Mr. Carlson says it would be better to rest over here to-night and depart in the morning."

Hedges nodded.

"Mrs. Graham is expecting you. She's the wife of the engineer who runs our boat and the machine shop. You passed their cabin on the way up from the river. I told her I'd bring you right over when you came in."

Edith followed the old Factor out and toward that cabin where she had seen the white woman and child. Carlson stood at the open doorway of the post staring down toward the river. At last Hedges returned and the two men looked at each other. Finally Hedges spoke.

"I always kind of liked Stewart, and I never could

quite figure him. It looks to me like he's in for trouble, though I guess he's sort of used to that."

Carlson stirred but did not answer, and the old Factor went on.

"You don't recall the time he licked two of those wood choppers the company sent up river to pile fuel for the boat. That was before you came here to be superintendent. Those two'd carried off the girl of a trapper named Lalonge up there. Stewart wasn't much more'n a kid himself then—fact is, he ain't so much more now, not over twenty-eight, I guess."

Hedges brought out an old pipe and lit it.

"Well, man, somehow Stewart heard this pair'd picked up that little girl—Violet Lalonge, I think her name was, and was taking her along with them in their canoe. She's about three-quarters red. I've seen her and she is a pretty bit. Of course, nobody but her saw what happened when Stewart caught up with them that same afternoon but he brought 'em both all the way down to Black House where we had a hard time pullin' one of 'em through. They hadn't hurt the girl none and it may be they didn't intend to, but Stewart didn't bother tryin' to find out. He's like that."

Carlson looked deliberately away and spoke slowly as though choosing his words with some measure of rough delicacy.

"You'd better be careful talking to Miss Mason about that. She said some things to me on the way up, sort of round about, that made me think Rodgers has been hinting about Stewart and them Indian girls."

The old Factor's head came up sharply. His voice was protesting.

"But Stewart ain't that kind," he said.

"I know it," Carlson said. "I found it out when he worked down river with the gangs a couple seasons."

"Yes," Hedges said, "I mind the time. That was after he came back. He'd been outside for about four or five years before that, down in the States somewheres."

They were silent for a few moments, then Hedges spoke again.

"I didn't believe the man was born that could beat Stewart but I wouldn't be surprised if Rodgers had figured out a way."

"Stewart beat Rodgers before when he tried to get those lands," Carlson said slowly.

"Yes," Hedges said, "but there's a lot of things men like you and I don't know much about, and maybe there's some jobs a woman can do better than a man. They have ways a man can't figure."

The old Factor sat down in the open doorway and

looked out over the river toward the rising hills beyond, forest clad, the wilderness. At last he spoke.

"This morning I told Father Macungie she was coming in to-day. I couldn't tell her but he said he didn't want to meet her."

"He always has sort of liked Stewart," Carlson said. "He might do well to remember Mr. Rodgers had that church built for him on land the company owns."

Hedges puffed slowly on the ancient pipe.

"Wherever there's wealth in the ground men will fight almighty hard to get it, Carlson," he said, "especially if those who own it don't know what it's worth. And they don't seem to care what they stoop to."

The lumber company superintendent turned sharply and looked down at him.

"I wouldn't start thinking that way, Hedges," he said, "and you understand that I'm handling this whole thing."

The old Factor nodded.

CHAPTER II

THE river was turgid between steep banks where a lacy network of creeping juniper bent almost to the waters. Silvery aspen poplars grew to the edges. Beyond, on the rising slopes of hills over which the mountains towered were birch clumps in gorgeous new leafage, white spruce, fir, a mingling succession of the forest. The flat, pinkish blooms of the wild roses were matted thickly here and there as though Nature, dissatisfied with the sombre winter, had dipped a lavish brush and daubed at random. There were dots of fiery hue in the forest, tints of blossoms that told of wild raspberries, gooseberries, occasionally the whitish aureole of a wild cherry.

Among some willows sounded the pulsing softness of a myrtle warbler. It was taken up by an endless twittering and rolling of bird voices that seemed to subside in awed repression as the marvelous song of a hermit thrush came like liquid gold from a sparsely wooded ridge. This was the incomparable, and the wilderness listened entranced. It throbbed and trembled, fading at last into silence.

A beautiful mountain bluebird coasted down suddenly to the water's edge as though a chip had fallen from the sky and a diminutive ruby crowned kinglet,

assured of safety, darted out to dip its tiny bill a few feet from the bluebird.

The season of new life was on the north. The sky lanes had been traversed by the heralds of spring and she followed close in her mystic robes, one touch of which brought the splendor of the earth up to meet her.

Rabbits appeared frequently, not yet rid of the white pelage of winter. A mink scuttled through the viburnum at a peculiar, hesitant gallop. Occasionally he peered into the water at a likely spot but if there were fish close to the bank the silt-laden waters held their secret well.

There was warmth in the new sun and the forest awakened under its lifting caress. The air was of a softly pleasant quality. The rising slopes of the hills seemed to beckon and the mountain heights beyond held a lure that was strong. From some mystic caverns in their heights the breezes came to curl down, heavy laden with the scent of spruce.

On a high plateau level grayish objects moved, a half dozen caribou bulls, less formidable and majestic of appearance now with their antlers cast aside. Higher still where a rocky bench broke the steep wall of stone three mountain rams nibbled at the coarse grasses that had found rootage beyond the edge of timber. By way of contrast an ugly cow moose with

loose tuftings of the heavy, brownish-black hair about her neck, stepped out among the willows edging a sandy bar where the river widened. At her heels was the ungainly calf about to receive its first lesson in the values of water, mud and sand. Plain ooze would have been more to the mother's liking but that was only to be found among the lakes deeper in the forest. Some instinct ordained that this exact moment was the right one for the first lesson, so the river must suffice. The mud could come later and then the pleasures of the lakes would be far greater, for the bulbs of the lily growths would be softer and bursting with life.

Somewhat hesitantly the calf followed her into the water, snorting a weak little grunt as a flight of lesser snow geese, the white wavies of the north, came low over the river and settled to rest. They might have been some majestic lotus blooms with their pinkish tinted bills and white plumage. Theirs was no hurried passing, for the nesting fields on the far boreal reaches would not be ready until late.

But there was an interruption. The cow moose lifted her head and her heavy ears came forward. She stood looking stupidly toward the bend of the river. Once she raised a huge forehoof and stamped it with an accompanying impotent splash. Then she wheeled about so that her own body might protect

the calf and shouldered him back toward the safety of the willows. A belted kingfisher swooped suddenly from a willow poplar and darted in a descending arc but did not touch the water. The bluebird and kinglet arose with quick fluttering of wings and were gone into the brush from which a fool hen, as the Franklin fowl is called, went with a whirring noise.

Around the bend in the river came a canoe. It seemed out of place, an interruption of nature in her most secret bower. It was a staunch, serviceable craft, and there was the rhythmic half lift of the paddles at bow and stern that told of master wielders. A moment more and that sense of intrusion passed. The canoe and the men who handled the blades took place in the scheme of things. They brought no garish noise, no untoward splash, merely an occasional bit of feathering as a paddle rose slightly too high. Both were dark and there was something that told of strength, a measure of coarse heaviness about them, yet capable withal. Flannel sleeves were rolled high and their forearms were thick. If the rich new color tones of foliage, the manifestations of bird life meant anything to them they gave no sign, did not even look toward that ridge from which the magic tones of the hermit thrush rolled and throbbed.

In the center of the canoe propped against the ash thwart was Edith Mason. That breeze which curled

down from the heights found wisps of her brown hair that had strayed. Her eyes were aglow with wonder and there was a richness of color in her cheeks loaned from nature herself when she touches with the scented fragrance of spruce and balsam.

She was a child in the land of beautiful dreams. She felt an impulse to speak, to gasp out incoherent wonderment. To her ears came the trembling cadence of the thrush and her eyes moistened at the indescribable tug at her heart strings. This was the song of creation. Surely it could be given to no other to hear and, yet, she wanted others to hear it, wanted to whisper of its awesome beauty.

She closed her eyes and a new sound came. From that magic realm within the guardian curtains of brush arose the soft lilt of the vesper sparrow. Over the wilderness day was dying, the long day of earliest summer. But it could not be so. It would merely sleep. Brown and purpling shadows were beginning to descend the slopes.

The man in the front of the canoe spoke without turning his head.

"Soon we shall be there, Mees Mason. The rivier he run faster now. Ees not so, MacEntosh?"

The sombre face of the man in the stern lighted.

"Ye're right, Lemier," he said. "Soon we'll be there an' then I'm thinkin' we're like to turn right

aroun' an' go back. An' I'm not the man to cross words wi' John Stewart, nor yet fists nor guns. 'Tis only two years since I saw him wi' my own eyes down by the mills when four birlers mean wi' the drink found him an' trouble together. 'Tis a bad combination. But they do say he has changed an' is not so quick to anger now."

"I thought he clung to this region," the girl said. "What was he doing down there at the mills?"

"Two years he wurrked among them," MacIntosh replied. "The wage was high."

Something smoldered near the surface in the eyes of the man at the prow.

"He struck the face of my brother so that hees teeth were gone then," he said, and added as though musing aloud, "and Paul Lemier has not forgotten. Paul Lemier does not fear him."

MacIntosh drove his paddle in with a little more power as though to lend emphasis.

"Ye'll do well to have some measure of respect for him, Lemier," he said. "An' if ye're thinkin' of wurrkin' out any grudges on him 'twould be as well did ye practice up a bit on a silver tip wi' an ingrown toothache first."

A heavy frown settled over the features of the riverman.

"Paul Lemier ees not drunken birler," he said, laconically.

"No—'tis a big man an' strong ye are, Lemier," the other said, "an' so were yer brother."

The girl interrupted and there was something impatient in her voice.

"Lemier, you'll simply have to put such thoughts out of your mind," she said. "We have other things than revenge to think about. You wouldn't want me to be sorry at having you along?"

The riverman said nothing but the sullen expression was not gone from his eyes. He looked straight ahead. There was no interest in his glance as the wavies fled to the sky lanes, scattering at the invasion of man, to resume their flight toward the north and west.

The paddles dipped and rose steadily. Edith Mason's eyes sought the forest, the brush-lined banks, the rising heights, and the trouble that had stirred during the conversation of the men gave way to a renewed wonder at the beauty of the world. There was another long bend and on the banks beyond were the marks of man.

Here the shore was lower. A broad trail came down to where a small pier was supported by poles from the bank. Here also the forest was cleared away for a short space at the river's edge and far

above an open slope was visible, broken in lanes where some crude plow had been used. But arms of the forest encircled all as though the wilderness had reached in, refusing to give up its grip and was waiting for man to cease his efforts that it might spread again and reclaim its own.

Perhaps a hundred feet above the bank were the remains of an old cabin and Edith looking at it saw that it was like the post at Black House. That must be the old trading post Stewart's father had established here and around which this settlement had grown. There was an atmosphere of decay about it now. It was some distance from the trail and there was scrub growth almost surrounding it. There the wilderness was closing in again where man had withdrawn. The doorway was open, the slab door off its wooden hinges and almost hidden from sight among the weeds. A corner of the roof had fallen in and the two windows were gaping holes while there were open crannies between the logs.

Farther up the slope where there were the marks of cultivation, another cabin nestled against the hillside. There, two children, a girl tall and slender, approaching maturity, and a small boy looked toward the river, and the boy pointed. A woman appeared in the doorway and stood shading her eyes with her hand.

Near the cabin was a rack of sapling poles and stretched along it were the drying fish. At one side of the doorway was a pile of firewood.

Perhaps a quarter mile away along the slope the roof and chimney of another cabin were visible above the dipping crest of the forest and farther on a third with a stumpy field about it. As the canoe turned in toward the landing Edith saw two smaller cabins in back of the one that had evidently been the post building. They, too, were fallen into decay through evident disuse, and were all but hidden where new growths were fast making headway in their task of obliterating the marks of man. An aspen poplar grew through what should have been the roof of one.

This was not quite as Edith had expected. Here was the settlement that she had come so far to find and it consisted of a few isolated cabins in the forest. She had looked for them to be closer together as they were at Black House, a small town, but she remembered the explanation of Hedges, the Factor, that they were scattered since the old post of Stewart's father had been abandoned. But now she was eager to land. That hundred and fifty mile trip up the river from Black House had tired her. There had been three days of paddling.

Here was the region where she was to carry on the work of which she had dreamed. From Rodgers,

from Carlson and Hedges and these canoemen who had brought her in she had learned of these people among whom her self-appointed tasks were to be carried out. There were a few whites, French and Scotch trappers, scattered families of Indians and some of mixed blood, and there was Stewart. She could not forget him and tried not to allow too definite an opinion of him to form until she had an opportunity to judge for herself. Yet, somehow, she sensed a personality of opposition. He had opposed Rodgers when by so doing he merely stood in the way of these people among whom he lived; he would oppose her for she was going to lead these people into acceptance of that which Rodgers offered.

She tried to picture him from the things she had been told and always he seemed a physical thing, powerful, uncompromising and selfish.

Somewhere in the midst of this domain of hills and forest over which she looked now and over which his sway seemed absolute was an area of a few hundred acres which was to be her stronghold. That land Rodgers owned, had purchased it from one who sold before Stewart could interfere. Rodgers had bought it to give the man a chance, the opportunity to get away from this wilderness to where mere living could mean something. On it were a couple of cabins and she would establish herself in one while MacIntosh would

remain here with her in the other. She would start immediately at the work she had planned out loosely so that she could adjust it to any conditions which had to be met. First she would seek the whites and tell them of her plans, in part at least. She would ask them to send their children to her each day. There might be eight or ten of them, and she would have a little school in her cabin. On Sundays she would have services, simple ones, and a Sunday School. Then, too, she would show them how much better off they would be living down in the valleys on farms and she would prove to them that Stewart was wrong if he tried to persuade them to remain. It would not be difficult. Her sincerity, her zeal, the very fact that she had given up almost every comfort and luxury wealth can offer in order to come here and live among them, devoting herself to their interests, must convince them.

As she looked up at these wild hills with their few cabins of hewn logs and the small cultivated patches it seemed pathetic that they should hold on here and refuse that which had been offered them. It was the old story of those settlements of the north. Hedges had described it so clearly. The Indians had found it a favorable spot for their fishing, the post had been established to trade with them. A few white trappers had settled, some of them to continue their pursuit,

others to work at odd jobs for the lumber companies down river while their families remained here. There had been inter-marriage, a mixture of the races. But there was this difference here and it caused the trouble. Stewart had made them establish homestead rights and among them they owned thousands of acres, all the land along the river and far back into the hills. Their cabins were scattered. There was no definite town, merely the rambling settlement, held together by an intangible thing, the insistence, the influence and domination of this one man, Stewart. And to what purpose? What vain dreams, what twisted ego ruled him? What power could he hold over them and for what selfish motive?

As the paddles drove the canoe toward the landing Edith saw that a group of three men were standing close to a clump of trees that grew above it. One was an Indian, tall and slender, a young man. The second was a heavy set, swarthy individual with graying hair. Both wore rough flannel shirts and corduroys. The Indian had on heavy moccasins and the other who was obviously of mixed blood wore low boots. Those impressions registered at a glance but it was the third man her eyes settled on. He was taller than the Indian and there was an immediate understanding that here was physical power, breadth of shoulder and chest, narrow hips and long thighs.

A certain suppleness was revealed as he moved a step forward and the others looked up at him as though expecting leadership. His sleeves were rolled high above strong forearms to which the wielding of an axe might be mere play. He wore the low, calked boots of a riverman. There was no hat on his dark hair and the set of jaw and chin were strongly rugged beneath a broad forehead and wide set blue eyes. His mouth was that of a serious man and loaned to the whole the sense of calm power which was so evident.

Edith saw that his eyes took in the whole of the canoe, gave Lemier a momentary glance of concentration and something else that might have been recognition, then fixed on her. She heard MacIntosh speak in a low voice meant only for her ears.

"That's him, Mis' Mason—'tis Stewart."

She saw his lips move as he spoke to the others. They did not follow as he came down toward the landing at a long, swinging stride.

Lemier drove the paddle deep, then lifted it and seized the edge of the landing, and Edith smiled up to the dark, towering man as MacIntosh spoke.

"'Tis long since I've seen ye, Stewart," he said, and she wondered at the deferential tone of this riverman whose attitude seemed so vastly different than that of Lemier. Stewart's mouth relaxed into a smile.

"I've been looking for you for several days," he said. "I heard that some effort was going to be made to send us a missionary."

A slight flush came to Edith Mason's face. It was not what he said but the tone. So might one, sure of his ability to handle a task, speak when an inefficient meddler is sent to supersede him. Perhaps it was sarcasm. She looked at him and through her mind ran the warnings she had been given of him by Rodgers and Carlson. This was the man who would interfere with everything she'd try to do, who'd attempt to balk her at every turn, whose influence with these people she had come to help must be overcome. Now she was at her goal, the battleground on which she was to wage her fight and before her was the man who others said would be her enemy. The slight flush that had mounted at his words was gone and she smiled again.

"I'm hardly a missionary," she said, and his eyes were steady on her, calm, penetrating, questioning, as though he would know what manner of woman she was and had learned that words mean little. She resented the fact that it was disconcerting.

Lemier drew the canoe in toward the bank and Stewart spoke.

"The place that I suppose you are seeking, the

land that Rodgers owns, is down below a bit, perhaps a mile. You passed it where the river bends."

Lemier stepped out of the canoe onto the bank and drew the big craft close where its prow rested on the steep shelving bank.

"We land where we please an' take not order from you," he said, and straightened quickly.

"I'm not trying to give you any orders, Lemier," Stewart said. "I'm telling you the easiest way to get where you want to go. My landing here is a full mile above that place."

"Your landing, ha!" Lemier said. "You own whole rivier, eh? I t'eenk not. Paul Lemier land where he want."

Stewart looked at him steadily but did not answer and Edith Mason interrupted hurriedly.

"Get back in the canoe, Lemier. If Mr. Stewart doesn't want us to land here we will not have any trouble about it. We'll try to find a place where we can land."

Stewart's glance shifted from Lemier to her.

"You can come ashore here if you want to," he said, and his whole manner was quiet. "I merely tried to explain that the place Rodgers owns is down river a bit and you can save carrying your stuff some distance by going down there. MacIntosh knows about where it is—at the bend. You'll find a trail

leading through the curtain of trees along the bank. The cabins are hardly a hundred yards above the river."

Again he looked at Lemier whose attitude was only too plainly bellicose, then he turned and walked back toward where the others waited.

There was a heightening of color in the cheeks of the girl as Lemier shoved the canoe off and clambered in. Somehow, she felt as though there had been a clash that had brought a measure of humiliation. Had he planned it to be that way and with those others looking on?

Once MacIntosh spoke.

"The Injun' wi' him were Oowakano. 'Tis most like brothers they are. The other were Lalonge, who traps hereaboots an' ye'll see more of him wi' his Injun wife an' bairnies. His own mother were a red."

Twilight was settling on the river as the canoe went back downstream close to the bank. Only the slight sound of the dipping paddles broke the silence as they neared the bend where MacIntosh turned in to the shore.

CHAPTER III

EDITH MASON was slightly nauseated. But she realized that it was only the coarseness which aroused that feeling. The cabin to which she had come was a square building, the crannies between the logs plastered with mud. It was a one-room affair with a loft to which a ladder gave access, and the furniture was crude, home-hewn, a table and some bench-like chairs. About the cabin on all sides there were growing things in a field from which the stumpage had not all been cleared. There were three children, a girl of perhaps eighteen, a willowy creature possessed of an elusive quality of beauty that might have been a heritage from the wild; a boy of ten, slender and straight, and a little fellow who lay sick among the blankets.

In all of them the touch of the blood was evident, weakest in its manifestations in the girl whose skin was tinted. The mother was almost a full blood, the father a half breed trapper and riverman named Lalonge who had settled here. Edith recalled seeing him with Stewart the day of her arrival. And here, concentrated tangibly before her eyes, was the whole thing which she had invaded the north to overcome. Two weeks she had been here, two weeks during which she had lived in one of the cabins on

the land that Rodgers owned, and MacIntosh remained with her, living in the other. Lemier had returned down river to the mills from which he had been sent with MacIntosh by Carlson to bring her here.

And in those two weeks the realization had grown gradually that she was strangely helpless, a sense of futility that aroused something deeply determined, that had shown her new depths of fight never guessed before. They had been made up of days of effort during which she had gone with MacIntosh from cabin to cabin in the area of a few square miles along the shores where the habitations of these mountain and river folk nestled and held grimly. She had talked to them, urged them to send their children to her each day in order that she might teach them, tried to win their confidence by telling them in most open fashion of her plans that would include a Sunday School there on the acreage where she had taken up her abode and to which children and adults alike might come. At times she had grown inwardly impatient with them at the stolidity and absolute lack of enthusiasm that met her. Did they not want to progress? Were they not interested in lifting their children above what they themselves had attained? Would they be content that their sons must always go on working as rivermen, in lumbering gangs or following the trap lines in winter, depending wholly on the vagaries of uncontrol-

lable nature? And she had been unable to fathom the manner in which they accepted what she said. It was as though they had expected just that sort of thing, as though what she would say had been explained to them in advance, as though all her purposes had been told them before and then the motives underlying them twisted in sinister fashion. Determination and resentment had grown within her. She felt that the source of this opposition would not be difficult to guess but it was hard to overcome. She had been anticipated at every turn. Invariably she found a cold courtesy awaiting her and sensed something else, something unfathomable. Suspicion? Yes, and a feeling that some among these people would have liked to talk openly, frankly, but dared not.

This, now, was the first letting down of the bars to her. This willowy slip of a girl whose wild beauty made itself felt despite her crude garb of gingham and moccasins, had come to Edith Mason but an hour since, a sprite of the morning seemingly, to ask her aid. And Edith Mason thrilled eagerly at the opportunity. She had been to this cabin on the hill before as she had to the others, had met the same cold reserve here, and now they had come for her. The smallest boy was ill and they had thought perhaps she might understand what they did not.

Plainly the child was suffering from measles and

for an hour she talked to the mother explaining in the simplest manner the curative qualities of ample fresh air and hot drinks. Readily she ministered to the child that lay whimpering among the blankets and then she spoke of other things.

"Wouldn't you like to have your children come over to me in the mornings?" she asked. "I've got some books, and I'm getting more. It would make life so much more worth while to them."

But the woman was evasive, uncertain, despite repeated urgings, and at last Edith departed. Outside, the girl who had come for her was waiting, still somewhat shy but smiling readily in response to that of Edith.

"Won't you walk down a bit with me toward the river?" she asked. "MacIntosh is waiting there for me and if you'd like me to I'll be glad to send him back with a book for you."

Her next words might have been the most natural question in the world.

"Do you read?"

The girl's shyness seemed to fade a bit and she nodded and came forward willingly enough; they walked together slowly down the worn path toward the river.

"Have you ever gone to school?" Edith asked, and there seemed nothing inquisitive about her question-

ing. Slowly she drew the girl out. Her name was Violet Lalonge and there was a refreshing frankness about her. No, she had not gone to school, that is, not in the accepted meaning, for there were no schools here. But during the past winter and the one before she had learned to read and had been given the educational rudiments by Stewart. The girl spoke with a confidence of expression that was surprising, and as she mentioned Stewart it was with admiration all too evident.

Edith Mason was amazed. At the mention of his name her lips compressed and she wondered whether she had heard aright. With surprise she learned that not only this girl but a dozen other children of these people hereabouts had spent mornings when the storms and snows permitted, at his cabin. Not all of them liked it, but he had ordered their parents to send them and it was evident that to the girl his order was final, above question or refusal.

She seemed hesitant now as the talk was of Stewart, but Edith gleaned some things that gave her a foundation for understanding this man who was so strangely dominant among these people. He was the son of one of them. He had been born in that old post building which was fallen into decay down by the river; the child of an independent trader who had come into the wilderness with his wife. He understood them

and his intelligence and ambitions were greater than theirs; he found it easy to rise to the place where he was a leader among them. Edith had encountered similar cases in her settlement work amid the slums of the city. Down there such individuals usually became small political bosses, ward heelers, she'd heard them called. It was surprising that he did anything of that kind for their children but might it not be easier to dominate them when they grew up if he had the opportunity to train them while they were young?

Suddenly the girl looked at her.

"Why did you come here?"

There was a directness about it that Edith welcomed and she explained simply her plans for a school, for some effort at Christian training and her ambition to raise the standards of their existence. She made passing mention of teaching them to see the advantage of living under other conditions than in these rugged hills from which the mountains rose. There was a suggestion of how much better it would be down on the rich farm lands of the valleys toward the south.

"Life would be so much easier and you would all be far happier there," Edith said.

"You people want to take our lands away," the girl said quickly.

Edith smiled patiently and shook her head.

"No, Violet," she said, "we don't want to take your

lands. We want to help you and give you better homes, to show you how to live better."

The girl started to speak, but hesitated and they walked along together, Edith holding her arm and smiling gently as she looked into her face. She saw that hesitation.

"Has Stewart told you that we want to take your homes away?" she asked. "If he has it is either because he does not understand or he is telling a falsehood."

"You mean a lie?" the girl said, and Edith nodded.

Immediately she saw a change in the girl's attitude. Her well-moulded little chin came up and there was defiance in her eyes. It was the sudden transition from a naive girl to a proud woman.

"Stewart does not lie," she said. It was a quick defense, and Edith hesitated, realizing that here was another tangible thing which would have to be understood and met in its own terms.

"It may be that Stewart does not understand," she said. "If he has told you we want to take your lands he is telling you only a half truth and half truths are as bad as falsehoods. Wouldn't it be far better for you and your brother and sister if you lived down in the valleys on farm lands where you could have schools and churches, where you could learn things and grow up like other children? You are al-

most a woman. Do you want to marry a trapper and live here in a cabin where your children must grow up as you have grown and live the same way? I dare say Stewart seems to you to be a big and great man from what I've heard, but think of how small and unimportant he is compared to Mr. Carlson, the superintendent of the Rodgers Company's mills down on the river, or to Mr. Rodgers, men who are doing worth-while things. And Mr. Rodgers wants to help you the same as I do."

"He wants our lands," the girl said.

Edith smiled.

"I don't believe Mr. Rodgers cares a bit about your lands. He owns thousands of acres far down on the river, all he can want for his lumber mills."

"Why did he try to get them two years ago when there was a bad winter and furs were scarce?" the girl asked. "First he offered to lend my father some money but Stewart wouldn't let my father take it. I guess he was afraid of Stewart, and Stewart brought everything we needed up from the post at Black House. He brought things for the other people who needed them, too."

"How did Stewart get them?" Edith asked.

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"He worked down with the lumber gangs."

"And he gave your father and these other people

what they needed for nothing, helped them?" Edith Mason was troubled. Here was a turn that she had not expected, that would make her task more difficult. The man had the instincts of leadership and had apparently grasped every opening to tighten his hold on these people.

The girl shook her head.

"No, he didn't give them to us for nothing," she said. "He did something so that my father and the others cannot sell their lands unless he lets them."

Edith Mason saw a light of understanding. Here was an inkling of explanation, perhaps. Stewart had opposed the efforts of Rodgers to aid these people and had used the opportunity to establish a firmer hold on them himself, and why? He would not allow them to better their own conditions, had dominated them to an extent where they refused to accept outside help, had wrapped his power about their poor lands and belongings, and for what reason? She had heard much about him from Rodgers and MacIntosh and Carlson. Was it mere lust for power as his crude mind must understand power, a realization that if they went to other regions and progressed he must see himself shorn and alone? Could that be it? At least, he must have the elements of leadership, for these were a people, white and red alike, in whose veins pulsed the wild blood of freedom itself.

The path along which they walked together narrowed as it went through the brush near the river and the sweet scent of cornel mingled with the odor of a matted clump of wild roses. A sociable little red-poll went from bush to bush in advance of them.

"Is Stewart married?" Edith asked at last.

She noted a sudden change of expression and their eyes met fairly. The girl hesitated, and there was something personal about the way she looked now at the woman from the city.

"No," she said.

"Does he live among you?"

Again the girl hesitated and Edith Mason was conscious of the intent study in her eyes.

"No," she repeated, but offered no explanation, and stopped short.

Edith Mason wondered and could not understand the sudden refusal of the girl to go farther with her. Perhaps it was because they were near the river and MacIntosh was waiting there to accompany her. Then she remembered the veiled hints Rodgers had made of Stewart and an Indian girl. It had been vague at the time but now it came back with sudden clearness that was nauseating, repellent. Edith looked at her pityingly. It was all too evident that this glorious slip of a girl idolized him. Now she could

understand the sharp defense of his name against the suggestion that he lied.

There was no real depth to the smile of the girl as she turned and started back up the path toward the cabin. It was merely a smile of the lips and there was something troubled in the dark eyes.

Edith stood looking after her, then resumed her way along the path through the brush and stopped. There at the bank of the river were two men and she recognized one. It was Stewart. At the sound of her approach the other turned and she saw that it was Lalonge, the father of the girl. His black hair was graying and there was something coarsely strong about his lined face. He smiled response to her greeting and Stewart nodded gravely. This was the first time she had seen Stewart since her arrival and she stopped. Soon or late she must come in contact with him and she determined that where she was concerned, at least, there would be friendliness of personal relations as long as he permitted it, even while she opposed him. Her opposition would be open.

She turned from the path and went toward them, and was aware of the surprise that turned to questioning in Stewart's eyes. Evidently he had not expected this. What did he think she was—a snob so intent on her own superiority that the ordinary human qualities were missing? Perhaps if she could convince

him of her own sincerity he might help in some things, at least. His questioning glance was steady on her eyes and she smiled, a frank, open greeting.

"Why haven't you been over to see me?" she asked.

Somehow those dark blue eyes had an unsettling effect. They seemed to be trying to search deep. It was as though he did not believe her words and sought to find hidden purpose. Was it suspicion?

"I hadn't thought of it," he said.

At least he was frank and Edith found it disconcerting.

"I—I sort of thought you'd be neighborly," she said, and smiled again, quickly, "even though we may be opposed to each other."

His steady gaze never left her eyes.

"I'm planning to start a little school over there in my cabin," she went on, "and I rather hoped that you'd help in getting folks to send their children."

Stewart nodded in that grave fashion and for the first time his eyes left her face. He looked out over the river.

Lalonge departed up the hill with a farewell that was little more than a grunt.

"You hardly expect me to aid you in any way," Stewart said, "when I know the motives underlying everything you'd do."

"Has it ever occurred to you that you just might be wrong?" she asked. "I suppose it would be a terribly hard thing to admit that these people might be better off if they didn't listen to you—if you were not here."

A slow smile broke over Stewart's face. Again that penetrating glance was on her.

"If you didn't know and didn't understand that would have amused me," he said.

"You know it's so," Edith said. "You know they would be better off on farms where they could be working and developing for the future, where their children could have all the advantages that other children have, away from this horrible wilderness?"

"Is it horrible?" Stewart asked. "It's never seemed so to me, and I've spent all but a few years of my life right here. It's always seemed wonderful to me."

He was looking out over the river again and Edith noted something wistful about him.

"Perhaps you have to be born a part of it to understand," he went on, and he might have been musing aloud, "to love it as I've loved it, to feel that the trees are talking to you, to watch for the birds to return in the spring and to sympathize with those that remain throughout the long winters; to find music that answers the longings of your soul in the brooks and the wind, to know that the Creator has

provided in His wisdom for all living things by the succession of wild fruits and the game and fish."

Edith stared at him. There was depth that she had not expected, power in his words, clearness—and, yet, he was a dreamer.

He stopped short and looked back at her.

"You and your kind are the ones who don't understand," he said, "and if you did it wouldn't matter. You don't think in such terms. You see certain advantages, gains, wealth; you think in the same way as Rodgers. You've gotten away from life. You won't let yourself see the injustice you are trying to do. You'd take from these people what belongs to them, their heritage, and what would you give them in exchange? Farms! Not the worth of what you'd take by any means! Merely small places where they could toil their lives away to no better advantage than they can here and with no better chance—not as much, in fact! You talk of the disadvantages of this horrible wilderness but you forget that a man can make of himself what he will. If it is so horrible why did you come here?"

The sheer strength of him radiated. Edith could sense it. It was almost overwhelming, but its purpose was wrong. Here the mainspring of all that she had come north to combat was revealed. What an ally this man might have been, but now she knew from

his words, from his attitude, that it was impossible. She felt a touch of sadness that it was so, but he plainly had left no choice. He was unalterably opposed to her and her purpose, to that for which she had given up the best of life as she knew it, to come here and make any sacrifice necessary.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Your mind is evidently fixed and you won't see things any other way. You won't admit the possibility that you are wrong."

"Wrong!" Stewart said and laughed shortly, somewhat bitterly.

"Yes, wrong," Edith said. "You are wrong and you make it impossible for me to do anything but oppose you, to try and win the confidence of these people away from you by showing them that you are wrong. I'd hoped until now that you might understand and come to the point of helping me. We'd both have been happier and found it much easier to aid them. I'm going to have to do things that I'd rather not, and I'm going to do them as impersonally as possible."

Stewart's gaze was steady on her.

"I'll not be surprised at anything," he said.

Edith's eyes met his.

"I'm sorry," she said, and turned away. Fifty feet from where they had stood the path turned and came out on the open river bank. She followed it around

the long bend to where MacIntosh sat on a log smoking contentedly and waiting.

He arose at her approach and indicated the direction where she had left Stewart.

"Did ye see Stewart an' Lalonge a while back?" he asked and laughed. "I heard them a-talkin' an' crept close to listen. Stewart was a-tellin' him to git busy on the pertaties what needs cultivatin'."

MacIntosh laughed again.

"Lalonge don't like that. He always used ter depend on huntin' when they needed food in the winter. He was kickin' too, because his darghter believes anything Stewart sez is gospel."

Edith did not answer and MacIntosh led along the trail that followed the bank of the river a ways and then turned up around the edge of a hill to where she had established fairly comfortable existence in one of the solid cabins on the land which Rodgers owned. As she walked she was troubled in mind.

At her cabin she sat a long time in thought, looking out through the open doorway across the wide cleared space to the woods lower down on the hill. Birds flew among the brush that was growing up in the clearing and a woodchuck scurried to a rock pile. Twilight settled gradually and at last a plan came to her.

Carlson and Hedges would carry out her requests,

and Rodgers had told her she was to place reliance on the superintendent in any emergency. He would see that whatever she ordered was done. It was good to know now that she had such support for if they were to win out she must cut off all possible sources of aid to Stewart.

She went inside and wrote a note to Carlson asking him to stop Stewart's trade at Black House post. There was a pang of regret and sadness as she penned it. So far as she knew that was the only place at which he could obtain the necessities of civilization. Then she wrote to Rodgers, telling of conditions here, of her contacts with Stewart and of the wall which she found on all sides, a wall of distrust that only he could have reared among these people. She told of the idea of stopping his trade at Black House and also that of those who adhered to him so that none of them could obtain anything unless they had her consent. In detail she wrote, for she wanted him to know what steps she had taken. Lemier or some of the others from the mills or Black House would be up in a few days, then she would send these letters down, knowing that the necessary steps would be taken by Carlson immediately.

She also wrote another note and it was to the son of Rodgers. She smiled and realized that her thoughts had been too busy during these past two weeks to

think of him—much. He had not wanted her to come. . . .

She found herself given over to thoughts of him now. He was not exactly unsympathetic to the things she was interested in, but, well, he was immersed in business and ultimately would have to take over all the great structure of interests his father and her own had built up.

CHAPTER IV

SEVERAL days had gone by and Lemier had arrived from the mills with letters from her mother and various others and some few supplies that she had need of. When he departed her notes went with him and now as she walked along the trail by the river from her cabin toward the landing she thought over the step she had taken in cutting off Stewart's trade and that of all the others unless they came to her. That would be the first definite act toward checking and overcoming his strength among these people. They would see tangible evidence that by adhering to him they were suffering themselves. Also they would realize that she and Rodgers had certain, definite powers, and when they did come to her she would help them willingly. She would lift the ban at the post on any of them who asked her. She did not want to cause them any discomfort or hurt. Perhaps it would be best to tell them that only through her could they obtain anything at Black House. She would wait until she heard that some of them were going down and then she would let them know.

MacIntosh followed her along the trail. Ahead it opened on the cleared space about the landing and Edith stopped. Realization came that the scene on

which she looked now was a part of the life of these people among whom she had come to live for a time, at least. It was something new to her. If she was to succeed in the thing for which she had come here she knew that a complete understanding of them and their way of life was imperative, and here was a segment of it.

Near the landing she could see two of the cumbersome appearing canoes. In one of them were a woman and boy handling the paddles and a man in the center, while the other had a woman in the stern and a man at the bow. She saw that they worked at a thing that seemed to be fastened in the river to posts that projected a little above the water like saplings driven down into the mud.

At last the men lifted something and she saw that they held cords while the women paddled toward shore. Questioningly she turned to MacIntosh a few paces in back.

"Have ye never seen the nets brought in before, Mis' Mason?" he asked.

It seemed a sturdy task to impose on women. She looked back toward where the two canoes were at the bank and the men had clambered out, dragging the nets. In a moment the women and the boy were out also and the canoes hauled ashore. Then the mesh of the net appeared and all pulled together. It

was long, perhaps seventy-five feet of it, and there was reason for its weight. Here and there amid the mesh appeared gleaming fish, many of them unbelievably large. She had thought that such big fish existed only in the ocean. And they must be plentiful for there were a score or more. They seemed to be fastened in the meshes of the net. She turned again to MacIntosh. This was only one of the many things she would want to know about if she was going to have an understanding of these people so that she could meet them on grounds that they could comprehend.

"Tell me about it," she demanded. "Do the women and children have to work like this? What kind of fish are those and what do they do with them?"

MacIntosh came to her side and took from between his teeth the pipe he had been smoking.

"I guess you don't onderstan' this kind o' thing, Mis' Mason," he said, "but up in this country the women an' the bairnies, too, has got to do their share o' the wurrk, sometimes more'n their share."

He pointed toward the net.

"'Tis a strange thing but in the north the fish hae more than onything else to do wi' the establishment of the trade posts an' settlements. . . . See yon net. 'Tis a story in itsel'. 'Tis whut is called a gill net.

At night the fish tangle in it. The big one there is a lake trout, full thirty pound, an' they grow bigger. 'Tis not them that are best though. Those wi' the yellow bellies whut the women are takin' out are the whitefish—attihawmeg they are called hereaboots. An' those twa little fellas are goldeye which always swim wi' the whitefish."

MacIntosh shook his head sagely.

"But the whitefish are the ones that count here. Ye can do wi'out meat an' vegetables do ye but have them to eat, an' ye'll do well. Nor do ye grow tired of them like ye do of the trout an' other fish. The trade posts an' even the Injun settlements are made at places where they are plentiful. This now is only play. 'Tis in the fall and winter the big fisheries are made. Do ye go down to Black House in October an' ye'll see the post nets bein' dragged in wi' thousands of the whitefish. The air is then cold an' they freeze for the winter. Now those that are caught must be dried an' smoked."

MacIntosh was halted in his narrative by the appearance of a man where a trail came out of the forest. It was Stewart and he apparently did not see her where she stood some distance away with MacIntosh. He spoke to the others and then brought a canoe from among some bushes. Before he launched it he turned to the men again who had been work-

ing at the nets. Edith could not understand the meaning of what he said but MacIntosh laughed, and she turned to him inquiringly.

"He's tellin' them they'd better leave the fishin' to the womenfolk an' be tendin' to their fields," MacIntosh explained.

Stewart stepped into the canoe and shoved off. As it surged forward under the long sweep of his paddle he saw Edith and MacIntosh. A few yards from where they stood near the bank he passed and nodded. MacIntosh called a greeting and Edith waved, smiling. She stood watching and there was something that fascinated in the mighty strokes that drove the canoe ahead, lifting a curl of white water in front where the prow rode high. The paddle blade rose and fell steadily as though the wielding of it was no effort. A few moments and the craft had disappeared around one of the bends downstream.

"I'd no like to race him down to Black House wi' my life dependin' on it," MacIntosh said.

Edith started.

"Black House!" she said. "Is he going . . . ?"

MacIntosh looked at her questioningly.

"Did ye no hear him askin' if ony of 'em wanted him to fetch things?" MacIntosh asked, indicating the small group engaged in fishing.

Edith's brow puckered.

"Stop him, MacIntosh!" she said. "Can't we head him off?"

Again the riverman looked at her with that questioning glance and shook his head.

"Stewart?" he said. "Nae, Mis' Mason. Have ye no heard it said no man on the river can match him, an' him wi' two or three mile lead now an' goin' down river wi' the current. Did ye want him for ony reason?"

Edith started to speak, but hesitated and shook her head as her eyes looked vainly down the river where he had disappeared. It seemed needlessly brutal that he should have that long trip down to the post for nothing, and she'd intended telling him his trade was cut off.

CHAPTER V

THE air was warm and Black House lazed indolently, making up in a measure for the long months of the winter's toil. In a small garden patch about one of the log dwellings a woman clad in a gingham wrapper worked with a hoe while a barefoot child played with a half-grown pup near the doorway. Some clothing hung on a line. In the shade of the tiny machine shop two lumberjacks, boyish of appearance, sat on the ground playing cards and laughing loudly.

Only three tepees remained at the Indian settlement above the town, for the Spring trade was over. From between two of the log buildings another half-grown dog came running, holding a well-worn shoe in its mouth. It pranced playfully and a dark-hued child, dirty of appearance, darted out from between the buildings with a stick in his hand. On one foot was a shoe while the other was bare. Dog and boy disappeared among the cabins.

At the landing the small, side-wheel boat was tied up and Graham, the company's engineer, came up from the tiny hold, sweating and grimy with grease.

Stewart turned the canoe in against the bank and beached it.

"Hello, Stewart," Graham called. "Ain't been down for a while, have ye?"

Stewart waved his hand.

"How are you, Graham?" he answered and went up the bank where a tall, thin man, very straight of carriage and clad in dark, plain garb and boots, stood looking toward him. The Reverend Macungie was living evidence that even a medical missionary must perform physical tasks to exist in the north.

He came forward to meet Stewart and there was a smile on his lined face as they shook hands.

"I'm glad to see you, Stewart, my son," he said. "I've been wondering why you didn't come down or whether you'd been here without stopping to see me. I hardly thought you'd do that and asked Hedges. He tells me you haven't been down for a long time."

The smile was gone from his face.

"What's happened up there since that woman came in?" he asked. "Hedges told me she was coming and I suspected that all was not as it should be."

"So far, nothing," Stewart said. "She hasn't taken me into her confidence but she's been telling some of the others what her plans are, and she seems rather open about it. From what I gather she doesn't have much use for me."

Stewart smiled.

"Naturally, she wouldn't," the Reverend Macungie said. "You're not surprised at that, are you, John?"

Stewart shook his head slowly and there was something that suggested mental tiredness, a great weight carried alone too long.

"I'm afraid it means another fight, John," the Reverend Macungie went on, "and you must not let it prey on your mind. Don't worry. All things right themselves, somehow, though we may not always understand. High purpose and courage cannot fail. I wish that I could come up there to live with you and help you but you know how I am taxed to the utmost in this district. Any time you want me to come up for a while I'll do it willingly."

His hand rested for a moment on Stewart's shoulder. It was the friendly gesture of a strong man who understands when another who has earned his respect is troubled.

"This is your fight, John, and the first blow has been struck at you here. I learned to-day that Carlson has ordered your trade cut off here at Black House. More than that, he's also stopped the trade of those folk up there who adhere to you. I've remonstrated and argued to no avail. Carlson threatened me and I've challenged him to take away this church which Rodgers built on land the company owns here. He's here, now, up at the post with Hedges."

There was a perceptible change in Stewart's attitude. That expression of tiredness was gone and there was a visible quickening. His mouth was tight. He looked up the bank toward the post building, then at the missionary.

"Father Macungie, don't come up there with me," he said, and shook hands hastily.

"Wait, Stewart!" the missionary called, but Stewart was going up the rising level toward the post building in long strides. The Reverend Macungie shook his head slowly once, then followed.

Inside the post building Carlson sat on a box, puffing at a cigar while Hedges stood in back of the counter measuring off some bright flannel cloth to an Indian who watched the procedure with centered attention, as Stewart entered, hatless and with the collar of his shirt turned down inside and the sleeves rolled high. About him there was a suggestion of readiness, of expectancy and strength prepared for anything.

Carlson looked up, then quickly took the cigar from his mouth and arose. Hedges also saw him and stopped his measuring of the cloth, holding it motionless in one hand. The Indian turned around and looked from one to the other. Perhaps he sensed the sudden force that entered like static powers released. He drew back a step.

Stewart came to the rough slab counter and stood looking down at the old Factor.

"Hello, Stewart," Hedges said, "I'm right almighty glad to see you."

There was something about it that did not ring true and Stewart's sombre, dark eyes fixed those of the Factor who was plainly uncomfortable. Carlson came to the counter a few feet from Stewart. There was silence, a strange silence at a time when men should have been full of conversation and questions.

The Reverend Macungie entered and stood in back of him, waiting, as Stewart spoke, and his voice was calm.

"Did you get those seeds that I wanted to try?" he asked.

The Factor was hesitant in his manner, confused. Twice he started to speak and halted. He was a man of straightforward ways without guile and with little diplomacy, accustomed to going directly to the point. And this was no easy task.

"I'm sorry, Stewart," he said at last, "but I don't think I'm going to be able to get them for you, them nor nothin' else as a matter of fact."

For a moment Stewart did not answer, merely looked at him.

"They are not for me," he said. "I wanted them

for Lalonge and some of the others to try out this season."

Hedges shook his head negatively.

"Not for them, neither," he said. Then his voice became surer, he met Stewart's eyes fairly. "See here, it's not my doings and I have nothin' against you, John Stewart, but I can only take my orders and they are to cut you and all the others that lives up there with you, off from all trade. I'm to pay off your credit in money."

There was a tightening about the mouth of Stewart, a slight quivering at the nostrils and then he smiled. Involuntarily Carlson drew back from where he had remained near the counter, and the old Factor seemed to brace subconsciously as though to meet some shock. But the smile spread to Stewart's eyes. His voice was soft.

"I need some quinine and I'd better take along some iodine," he said. "I'm all out of it and there's always need for that sort of thing, not for myself, but for anyone who comes along."

Hedges shook his head negatively again.

"I'm right sorry, Stewart," he repeated simply.

The smile might have been a fixed expression on Stewart's face, but it had vanished from the eyes. Perhaps he had doubted before.

"Who gave those orders?" he demanded.

Hedges looked quickly toward Carlson and Stewart faced about. The smile had vanished now. His mouth was very tight, his head slightly forward.

"Carlson, who is responsible for those orders, Rodgers—or—or her?"

The lumber company superintendent straightened.

"It does not matter who is responsible for them," he said. "That is none of your business. I gave them, and I am in charge."

Suddenly Carlson moved a step backward, and the Indian who had been engrossed in trade a moment before, sidled quietly out of the way. Carlson's attitude changed. He seemed to tense to meet a blow. Stewart advanced one step toward him. There was something ominous in the air. Accustomed to dealing with hard men, men close to the primitive in their instincts, Carlson found something different here, an intangible superiority that was above the physical in Stewart. Here were tremendous forces, rugged power that was not merely of the brute, a dynamic man.

Now he seemed to come forward slightly as one of the great cats might tense on the balls of its paws before a spring.

His right fist raised and smashed down on the heavy slab counter with such force that the bolt of cloth bounced off to the floor. Hedges jumped

and some of the heavy color was gone from the face of Carlson who cast a quick glance toward the door.

Deliberately Stewart spoke.

"Carlson, I've got a credit here. This post accepted the furs and money I brought here to establish that credit for myself or any of my people who needed it. It was done in good faith. . . . It is the way of business in the north and now you are going to live up to it."

Again his fist smashed on the counter, and the heavy slabs bounced up.

"That credit is mine; any goods that I want to draw against it are mine for the asking, and I'm going to have them—now."

Carlson hesitated; there was heavy perspiration on his forehead. He moistened his lips while Stewart stood immovable in front of him. At last he looked toward Hedges and nodded. Stewart stepped back and faced the counter while Carlson went through into the storeroom. Hedges seemed eagerness itself.

"All right, John Stewart," he said, "I guess it wouldn't be no more than fair to give you what you want this time, seeing that you didn't know about this order and had that hundred and fifty mile trip down river."

He leaned far over the counter.

"I couldn't help myself," he whispered, and Stewart nodded.

"It was quinine and iodine you wanted, wasn't it?" Hedges asked, and turned toward the doorway into the storeroom when Stewart's voice halted him.

"I'll want two hundred pounds of flour, also," he said, "in fifties, tied together, and three hundred rounds of thirty-three calibre soft-nosed ammunition. That *ought* to be enough to stop *anything.*"

There was a peculiar, slow emphasis on the last few words.

Four trips Hedges made to the storeroom, piling the moisture-proof flour sacks on the counter. There were other things, too, some clothing, two new axes, the medicines and various goods that Stewart ordered thoughtfully. With each article Hedges made notations and finally said, "That about finishes your balance. There's only a little left."

"The ammunition," Stewart said.

Hesitantly the Factor turned once again and brought out the cartridges in boxes of twenty.

The Reverend Macungie who had been standing some distance in back of Stewart, silent, plainly awaiting developments, came up to the counter and loaded his arms with various articles.

Stewart tucked the cartridges and the medicines in his pockets, then swung the huge sacks of flour, tied

together, down from the counter and carried them out while Macungie followed. If the lifting of those two hundred pounds was any great strain it was not manifest. As he passed through the doorway the Indian looked at him and nodded and there was something of admiration in the glance of the red man. Carlson came from the storeroom and went to the doorway with Hedges who pulled out a bandanna and wiped his forehead.

Once the old Factor spoke.

"Orders is orders, but it's hell when you're hooked between two fires, ain't it?"

Stewart heard and smiled. Down at the river's edge he piled the things in the canoe along with those the missionary carried. Not a word was spoken of the happenings in the post building.

Father Macungie's face was grave.

"How long is this going to last, John?" he asked. "It can't go on this way much longer. Soon or late I'm afraid they'll be attempting some physical violence against you, my boy. Why don't you go down to see the Mounted? Even though their patrol doesn't come within two or three hundred miles of here they might send a constable up to protect you."

Stewart shook his head.

"What grounds would I have for seeking aid?" he asked. "They've done nothing that would warrant

my calling on the Mounted, and I don't need protection, Father."

"You're too self-reliant," the missionary said. "It's a fault with you. It isn't what Rodgers and these others have done, it's what they might do."

"I'm not afraid," Stewart said, and the missionary shook his head resignedly.

"Then why don't you go out now and try to bring in the financial help you'll need to put over your plans?"

Stewart was silent a moment, then spoke in slow fashion.

"I'm not ready yet, Father. I don't suppose anyone who has not been technically trained would understand fully, but I've got to be able to say, 'Here's the spot, and here and here.' I know there's mineral wealth up there but if I were to bring in engineers to prove my claims, and spent a long time searching it would shake the confidence not only of those I was trying to interest but my own people, too. I'm not yet sure of everything myself, and if by any chance things are not as I think then I'd be discredited once and for all. Rodgers would make capital of my slightest slip. I cannot take the chance of going off half cocked about anything. You wouldn't have me ask people to put their money into something that was not absolutely sure, and they wouldn't do it, anyhow.

Besides that, if I went away now for a long period with her up there I'm afraid she and Rodgers would undermine everything I've done. Before I go I've got to be able to say to my people, 'Here's your wealth that I've been working for,' and then I've got to be able to show it to them in a way that they'll understand so they'll remain steadfast while I'm away. Do you see, Father?"

The missionary nodded and Stewart held out his hand.

"You're not remaining long after that tiresome trip down," Father Macungie said.

"No," Stewart replied. "I have the feeling that I don't want to be away from up there much for a while. I've got to keep my fingers on the pulse of things, for there's no telling what might happen."

The missionary nodded slowly, sagely.

"God bless you, my son," he said as Stewart pushed the heavily laden canoe off and drove the paddle in. He stood a long time on the bank looking after the disappearing craft. Perhaps his thoughts went back over the years and found it easy to believe and understand the tales of this man's adolescent youth when he had seemed even among these people a thing purely of the wilderness. Perhaps he thought over the things he knew and understood, for he had seen Stewart grow from a stripling youth into man-

hood, had marvelled at the urge that made Stewart leave this region some years before to go out to civilization and then come back changed only through development. The Reverend Macungie understood many things about him that others here did not, for Stewart talked freely to him. At last the canoe disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

IN the stern of the canoe Stewart lifted the long, crudely made paddle in smooth, effortless strokes. The river was silent, its waters clear now and rippling. In the center of the craft and slightly toward the rear were the flour sacks and a rifle, their weight placed so that the prow rode high. On either side the shore rose at an angle that was not oversteep but mounted steadily, a range of hills through which the river had created its own valley during untold centuries. The slopes were covered with a thick maze of brush, small, twisted trees amid which the slashings from the lumbering operations were not yet hidden. Further back on the high levels not so readily accessible to man and his workings, the spruce and poplar and even the giant firs reared an unbroken wall of forest. Only the cream had been skimmed here and along the banks of the river for miles not one straight boled tree stood a mute memorial to its fellows. Even the saplings that the forest nurtures as straight and true as the giants which they are ultimately to replace were gone, crushed down in the lumbering, and the maze of seedlings coming up in their place were like cripples. But there was the assurance that, left alone, Nature would work this out although it must take far longer than if man had exercised some care. The wreckage

of the forest was like tinder, and those slashings were a menace.

But Stewart gave little thought to that. Some day someone with consideration for the future would become strong enough to put an end to that sort of thing, to make the lumber gangs clean up those slashings and remove their menace by burning them during the rains. It required only one trip along the rivers, one look at the vast area of brûlées, black and fire-swept, to realize that soon or late common-sense must prevail.

There were other thoughts that came uppermost in Stewart's mind and the wild reaches leaned to his mood. Mechanically the paddle dipped and lifted and the canoe went forward upstream against the ripples. From a cliff far back in the hills a golden eagle drifted as a thing suspended from the sky and there were swift flashes of coloring through the brush and cheerful bird notes from the myriad songsters that found this region ideal for the nesting season.

They were like old friends to the man in the canoe. He saw them and knew them, understood them it seemed. They were the symbols of life. From the rich mixture of their voices he could pick them out, recognize the coarse throatiness of the redwing, the chirruping of a robin and the short notes of the purple finch. There were others, an endless variety, warblers,

thrushes and tomtits, a vast family amid which the chickadees seemed to be playing hosts.

On an open bank where there were clumps of cornel and mountain cranberry a black bear and her two cubs were nosing about, seeking the dried remaining berries from the previous season that the birds had not already taken. The cubs fell to wrestling playfully, a ludicrous sight as they tugged and cuffed, while the mother cast them one look as though to make sure there was nothing too earnest about their strife, then grunted patiently and went on among the bushes. Suddenly one cub released its hold and ran in lumbering fashion after the mother. The other squealed, wriggled to its feet and followed, then stopped as suddenly and sat down on its haunches, front paws dangling over its pudgy little stomach, while it studied the canoe on the river.

Stewart held the paddle suspended a moment and his head went back in silent laughter. This was as naive as the play of some small child. Here there was no guile, no pretense; it was all rich with naked truth. He drove the paddle in and the water rippled away from either side of the canoe.

He felt the pulsing glow of life and mere living was good. What more satisfactory than to be alone with one's thoughts under such conditions? But there were unpleasant thoughts that recurred as he paddled

on. His mouth tightened and that sombre, smouldering light was in his eyes again.

He might as well face it now and fight it out with himself. There was contemptuous anger over what had happened at Black House. His trade was to be cut off. Worse than that—the trade of his people also would be stopped, and what else could that be but a blow directed at him through them? Did they think he was as one of these people, as Lalonge or Lebeau or any of the others who could not understand why he had forced them to retain their lands? Did they believe that they could rear an insurmountable wall about him, cutting off the necessities, closing all avenues by which he could hope to attain them, he and these people among whom he had been born and raised? Did they think they could subdue him as easily as that? He smiled grimly. They could not understand that he, John Stewart, of whom they knew so little, could revert to the wilderness and force it to sustain him. But the others, the women and children and even such men as Lalonge and Lebeau; they were accustomed to lean on the things of civilization. He saw that it would be necessary to provide in some measure for them or his hold on them would weaken and there was nothing overpleasant in the knowledge that they feared him and followed his leadership partly for that reason.

But there were other posts, rival companies and independent traders. There was a post at Alexis Creek. That was the nearest and it was a seventy-five mile trip over the mountains and then another hundred odd miles down the Chillcotin. But what difference did physical obstacles make in this fight? He had conquered them, and mental ones, too, many times before this.

"They can't win," he said aloud, and it seemed that the wilderness came closer sympathetically, that the chorus of bird voices held a note of pride, echoing his determination.

"They can't win," he repeated, "even though these fools who are my own people don't hold to me."

There was a dark thought in that and he went back to the morning a few days since when he had departed for Black House.

Violet Lalonge had come to him then and there was a kindly softness to his thoughts of the girl. It was for her and such as her that his purpose burned. It was not far-fetched to regard her as a beacon now toward which his course must hold. He saw her again as he had that morning, a slender thing of wistful beauty with great dark eyes. There was nothing sordid about the slip of a wrapper that covered her graceful body. She was as some spirit of the wilderness and he was aware as soon as he saw her that

she had something to tell him. Simply, directly, she told it.

Her father had been over to see this woman who had come among them from the city. Her father was angry that Stewart had forced him to spread his cultivation about the cabin that was their home. They had always lived through the long winters before by depending on the hunt and the post at which Lalonge traded his furs. Of course, the potatoes and other things he could raise were good to have during the winter and enabled him to save a good deal from his winter's trapping, a thing he'd never been able to do before and had never cared to think about. Why build up credits for his old age? His father had not done it and neither had other men and they had lived just the same. This cultivation of the soil meant that he must work during the summer when he had been accustomed to ease after the winter's trapping. The fishing was enough activity during the summer months, but Stewart had insisted that that must go on also, that the women and children would care for that as they always had. Often Stewart had taken her father away alone and said things to him that her father would not have allowed other men to say. But her father feared Stewart and so did all the others and he would be very angry if he knew of what she was doing now.

Stewart reassured her gently and she told him how Lalonge had returned to his cabin after seeing this woman from the States. She had heard her father talking to her mother and he said that maybe they were foolish not to have accepted the offer of Rodgers to give them money and rich valley lands in exchange for this home of theirs. Now they were helpless. When there had been a bad winter they had received aid from Stewart, and Lalonge knew enough about such things to know that in some mysterious way the paper which he had made his mark on at that time tied up this land which had been his father's before him so that he could not sell or give it away or what they called lease it, unless Stewart said so.

Lebeau and Doneshy and some others had talked with the woman also and Lalonge had an idea that they were beginning to think as he thought, but they also were tied to Stewart as he was. And then there was Oowakano, the Indian, who lived in his cabin higher in the hills. He had not gone to see this woman. To him it did not matter what others did or said and to him Stewart gave no orders. Oowakano listened to his counsels and was guided by them. This was the one man among all these people he thought of as his own, that he knew a friendship for in the fullest sense.

The paddle lifted and dipped with that same rhythmic

power and the canoe forged on upstream without interruption. Stewart's eyes drank in all the new beauty of the forest but his mind did not. His thoughts were back there with that slip of a girl whose blood was tinged with the darker hue of red. She, at least, and Oowakano would remain steadfast and believe in him to the last. And his hold over them was not fear. Rather it was of intelligence and understanding.

For one brief moment there came an intruding thought. Perhaps after all it might be that he was foolish in his determination and purpose. Would it not be to his own advantage to let these others sell or give away their birthright? Let Rodgers gain his hold—it could not affect those thousands of acres which he himself owned here in these wild hills, clear back into the mountains, land which no one else had wanted and which his father had established the rights to? But the image of Violet Lalonge, of Oowakano and of the children of Lebeau and the others seemed to come up in his mind and there was something in their eyes that made him crush down those thoughts once and for all as unworthy.

The sun seemed to shine more brightly, the songs of the birds held an intimacy of understanding and there was freshened strength in the rise and dip of the blade where it sparkled wetly.

CHAPTER VII

VIOLET LALONGE held her head high and her eyes were alight with indignation. There was a fresh touch of color in her cheeks and her lips were tightly compressed as she came with quick little steps along the tiny trail that led up out of a flat valley along the hillside. She was like some dryad in this setting, a part of it.

Suddenly she broke into a girlish run and called. Higher along on the trail where another path through the woods crossed it the tall, slender figure of a man appeared and Oowakano halted, looking toward her. Impulsively she ran to him and his dark-hued countenance was pleasantly aglow as he smiled.

"Has Stewart returned yet?" she asked in a hurried manner, and Oowakano studied her and saw that which drove the smile from his face, leaving a sombreness of expression. He shook his head negatively.

"I came now from his cabin where I went each day since he has been gone to see that all is well and to offer his great dog food. I had thought that he would be back to-day for he does not remain long at Black House when he goes there."

Steadily his glance met that of the girl and in his dark eyes was something that might have been a tenderness shining through.

"What is it that is heavy on your thoughts, Violet?" he asked.

The girl started to speak, hesitated, then her words came impulsively.

"This morning I went down through the valley to the cabin of Jackson to see the little one and I found him hungry and crying. While I was there his father came home. He had been away three days and the food that had been left was all gone."

Two tears started at the corners of the girl's eyes, and she went on, more slowly.

"I was angry and told him that he is a bad father and that I would tell Stewart, for he had been drinking again as we know he does when he brings the canoe in with whiskey."

A clouding came to the face of Oowakano and the girl went on.

"He said evil things to me and struck the little one to make it go inside the cabin and stop its crying."

The clouding on the face of the Indian became heavier. This was an old sore here, not alone with him because of the whiskey that this man sold to his people, but to Stewart also. Long before both he and Stewart had encountered trouble with this man Jackson, who was a trapper in name only now, who had dropped from that industry which was honorable at least to the rôle of a whiskey runner, a trouble

maker who carried on his illicit trade with such of Oowakano's people as either could not or would not see the evil that it brought upon them. Among the red trappers back in the mountains and further up along the river, living in the isolation of the wilderness and less and less civilized the further away they were, Jackson found markets for his occasional ventures at violating the law.

At best this was a difficult thing to halt since there were white men who turned all their craft to evading the watchful eyes of the Dominion authorities at trade centers and running their illegal cargoes in where they could be distributed by such as Jackson.

Well enough Oowakano knew the story and there was something that struck deeply, perhaps a racial thing, for the mother of Jackson's child had been a woman of Oowakano's people who had died long since. To the Indian a child in such surroundings, without a mother, without food and care was unthinkable, for the very traditions of his people held the children above all thought of the adult, and Stewart had brought him far along the best paths that the white man knows.

Something within Oowakano rebelled. Stewart had sought to turn this man away from his evil ways, had threatened to punish him if the whiskey running did not cease and had sought to force him into send-

ing his child to the woman who had come among them from the city for the helpful teaching that she could give. That had been difficult for Oowakano to understand. She was the enemy of Stewart and yet he would have turned over a child to her. But Stewart had explained that whatever interests she might represent, whatever teachings she might give, at least they would be better than the way of life this child of Jackson's learned, a way that was little better than that of an animal.

The Indian saw that other tears appeared in the eyes of the girl beside him and there was something that drew him very close to her.

"It is not good that you should cry, Violet," he said, and his voice was gentle, "nor is it good that we must always turn to Stewart when we do not see the way clearly. He has great troubles now for I see that there are many things which press heavily on him as when enemies strike out of the darkness. I am afraid that this woman who comes from the land of cities will bring much evil upon him and us and he has told me that he would have you go out to the school in the city so that you can help him in his fight for all of us. Others might not understand and might think evil but you and I know that it is good."

The girl nodded slowly and her head was bowed

while Oowakano stood very erect, looking down at her, and she seemed as one of the wood flowers that bends gradually in its little nook among last year's fallen leaves. They were silent a moment and a slight blush mounted on the cheeks of the girl that were tinted with that part of her blood which was other than white. The eyes of Oowakano revealed a deep tenderness of expression as he gazed at her, then his head rose and he looked back down the trail along which she had come from the cabin of Jackson. His face was strong.

"You came to tell Stewart that Jackson has brought the whiskey in again and that the child suffers," he went on, and it was as though he mused aloud. "That is bad. It is trouble within. We know that Lebeau and others have gone to this woman from the city, that some of them would turn from Stewart now."

He stopped, but the girl understood. Her own father had been one among them.

"It is like a great tree that can face the storms so long as the worms do not eat inside," Oowakano said. "We do not always understand Stewart but you and I know that his way is good and we must help him. It may be that we cannot force Jackson to stop his bringing of the whiskey, but there are things we can do for the child."

He looked at the girl and she nodded, but there

was something tremulous about her, and Oowakano guessed that whatever had happened at the cabin of Jackson must have brought fear to her greater than she had told.

There was an intangible sharpness about his eyes, a sudden understanding, and he went off down the trail in long strides. Once the girl's hands reached out impulsively as though to hold him back, and then she followed.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE was something squalid about the cabin beside a small creek meandering down across an open flat between the hills. Very obviously no effort had ever been made to better the conditions of those who lived there, and Oowakano stopped on the trail that descended toward it. A few paces behind came Violet Lalonge, and she looked past him timorously toward the building of roughly hewn logs. The mud plastered into the crevices between them was falling away, and the whole place had a decrepit appearance. Part of the stone chimney was down and refuse was thrown carelessly about. A scrawny dog pawed among it; at the doorway a boy of perhaps eight years stood with his little arms resting against the wall and his face buried in the crook of one of them.

This was the wilderness at its worst, and the face of Oowakano was dark as he looked upon it. Here was pathos and the realization of its extent brought revulsion, anger that was the greater because of something else that did not now meet the eye. He knew Violet Lalonge had not told him all, that Jackson must have spoken words she had not repeated.

He turned to the girl.

"Wait!"

It was a command. He was different now, and she looked at him with an expression through which something of quickening admiration shone. Perhaps it was that unexplainable thing in the feminine that has responded to the dominant in man since the beginning.

He went on down the trail, tall, long-striding, toward the cabin. As he came out into the open flat the youngster lifted his head and looked about furtively, cringing. Oowakano stopped and beckoned to him and the boy came hesitantly, looking back toward the open doorway of the cabin. Then he stopped and it seemed that he cringed again. In the doorway a disheveled figure of a man appeared. Of medium height, dark, with a growth of unkempt beard, Jackson was obviously the worse for too close relationship with that illegal cargo which his own canoe had brought in by devious ways for distribution among certain of the Indians and whites.

Oowakano went to the side of the boy and rested his hand on the youngster's head. He saw the thin arms and legs, the dark little face with its hollow cheeks.

"The little one is hungry?" he said, and the boy's lips quivered as he nodded and looked down.

"You know Oowakano," he went on. "Would you

like to come with him and live where people will be kind to you and where you will not be alone during the long nights to wish for food?"

Again the boy nodded; then like a startled rabbit he jumped forward and ran a few steps to get behind the Indian. Jackson came unsteadily from the doorway.

"What's that yer talkin' about?" he demanded; and the Indian straightened to meet him. There was contempt on the face of Oowakano.

It was evident that here words would be wasted and action alone would suffice. Oowakano knew there were laws of the white man which gave a parent control over its child; but here was a need that was surely above any law.

Jackson advanced belligerently in an unsteady way that told of the drink still strong upon him, and Oowakano saw that a clash was unavoidable. Suddenly Jackson broke into a reeling rush and went lumbering past as Oowakano stepped aside. There was a cry of fright and hurt from the child, and Oowakano saw that the man had struck it with one open hand.

Swiftly the Indian leaped, and Jackson crashed down, pinned and held fast on his face despite his struggles and curses. His breath came heavily. At last Oowakano arose and took the hand of the boy.

Jackson got up and called; but the child continued on up the trail and into the forest with the Indian. Jackson started to follow but when he saw Violet Lalonge waiting for the others, he turned and ran toward his cabin. A moment later he emerged with a rifle, but they were gone and he walked in wavering fashion toward the trail.

From the protection of the forest Oowakano looked back and saw him coming. The meaning of the rifle was plain and the Indian spoke to Violet Lalonge.

"Take the child to Stewart's cabin."

He turned aside into the brush, but the girl turned also.

"What will you do?" she asked. Something glistened for a moment down the trail; it was the sunlight touching the rifle barrel. She saw and understood; Oowakano was unarmed save for the sheath knife that was part of his trapper's equipment. Fear was on the girl's face.

"No," she said.

"Take him to the cabin of Stewart!" Oowakano commanded again, but the girl merely drew aside from the trail into the brush.

Oowakano smiled.

"You fear, then, for me even though I am in the woods which no white man knows so well?"

"But he has a rifle," the girl said.

"Oowakano does not need a rifle more than Ewedsie, the mountain cougar, to strike his enemies."

"But you must not kill him, and I shall not go unless you go with me," she insisted.

There was a crackling of fallen twigs down the trail and Oowakano picked up the boy in strong arms. His stride was long, and the girl ran before him up the trail. From behind there came the crash of a rifle shot and Oowakano stumbled and reeled slightly as the bullet seared where it touched his thigh. The child in his arms sobbed; the Indian spoke in a low voice to the girl, then leaped into the forest and put the child down.

"Take him to Stewart's cabin now!" he said and there was a note in his voice that brooked no questioning. Without a word the girl took the child's hand. Once she looked full into the eyes of the Indian and it may have been that the part of her that was white found no barriers that could not be leaped in that one glance of understanding. A few steps and the maze of brush had swallowed them up. Deliberately then, Oowakano moved off up the hill through the forest and his lariganned feet stirred up the leaf beds and broke twigs with a noise that could not fail to drown any slight sounds the girl and child might make in their flight. Near the top of the hill

was a trail that he knew well, leading from the river over the slope to Stewart's place.

There he would turn down toward the river and continue so long as Jackson followed, leading away from the cabin.

Occasionally he caught a glimpse of the man, fighting through the heavy brush, and it was as though one of the forest cats played with its prey, luring it on. Certainly a man under the effects of drink and encumbered with a rifle would not be overly formidable with the scrub brush and trees entangling him at every step. Oowakano was at the edge of that trail which led down to the river, then he stopped suddenly. Perhaps it was some instinct that warned him another had been watching. Unerringly his eyes went to the spot on the trail where a man stood, peering from behind a huge fir. It was Stewart; he had heard them approaching through the brush and waited, watching.

Swiftly Oowakano reached him and told what had happened. There beside the trail were the sacks of flour and other things that Stewart had brought back from Black House, and now his face was stern. Unhesitatingly he left the protection of the tree and walked deliberately to intercept Jackson.

The whiskey runner came blundering out where the brush was thinned near the trail; the dirty flannel shirt

was torn where the brush had caught it, his hair was a touselled, dark mass. He threw the rifle forward, but Stewart stood directly in front of him, a stride away. His eyes were fixed upon those of Jackson for a moment and there was an intangible clashing of the fibre of the two men. Then Jackson's head dropped forward slightly, he looked furtively about and shifted uncomfortably.

"That damn Indian, Oowakano ——" he started to mumble, but the words trailed off; he looked up at Stewart as though the power of the other man's eyes had lifted his own. There was something very stern in Stewart's face. He spoke and his voice held a hard quality.

"Jackson, you've been bringing whiskey in again."

There was no question, no temporizing. It was as if he had merely passed a final judgment. The other man seemed to cringe. Then Stewart spoke again and it was sharp.

"Three times before when I caught you violating the law, I warned you. The last time, you may recall, I told you if it ever happened again I'd drive you out of this region. Give me your rifle."

The other hesitated and Stewart took a step forward. Slowly Jackson handed over the weapon.

"The time has come when I've got to protect myself and these people in every possible way," Stewart

said, and his voice was quiet. "You have shown that you don't deserve the slightest consideration. If you have anything in your cabin that you want to take with you, get it and be at the landing on the river in two hours."

The other man looked up, doubt on his features, and Stewart nodded slightly.

"Yes, you are going to leave here to-day; and you are not coming back."

The sheer force of the man and his determination were evident in his voice, in his manner. There could be no questioning, no open rebellion. The last vestige of boldness was gone from Jackson.

"I guess mebbe that Indian is goin' to keep the boy, huh?" he said, but it was a false attempt, obviously sheer bluff.

"Someone will have the child who will give it proper care, at least," Stewart said, "and that is more than you have ever done. You have forfeited any right to it. You have forfeited any right to anything and you own nothing here, not even the land your cabin is on."

Jackson tried to sneer.

"Mebbe the boy's goin' to be raised by that damn Oowakano, like a red," he said, and Stewart eyed him coldly.

"That would be better than you'd do, and don't forget that its mother was one of these people."

"You ain't got any right to make me leave here." Jackson's voice was whining. Stewart looked at him with contempt, and pointed through the forest toward the flat in which the whiskey runner's cabin stood.

"Get whatever you want and be at the landing in two hours. I'll give you what that shack of yours is worth and then you're going to get out of here."

"What are yuh goin' to do if I don't?"

"I'll come and get you myself and take you down to the police as a whiskey runner. I think you know what that means."

The fear that came into Jackson's sullen face was genuine. Slowly he turned and went off through the forest. As Stewart stood looking after him Oowakano came to his side.

"Where is the child and Violet?" Stewart asked.

"I sent them to your cabin, thinking that he would not have the courage to hunt there for them," the Indian said.

Stewart was grave.

"Are there any among your people who would take this boy and raise him as one of their own and who would let him learn as you have?" he asked.

The Indian nodded.

"You know the love of my people for children.

There are many adopted little ones among them. Old Netawis, who lost his son last winter, longs for a boy child and would gladly let him come to you or this woman from the land of cities to learn from the books and also of God. You know that my people have strong belief in you and do as you say more willingly than the whites. Also the mother of this child was of the blood of Netawis."

Stewart nodded his head affirmatively. The stern thing was gone from his face and there was a tinge of sadness as he went up the trail toward his home, with Oowakano following.

CHAPTER IX

MORNING was high on the river as two of the big canoes of the lumber company came upstream. In the center of the first one a youngish man of neat appearance rested complacently against the thwart, and exhaled a thin stream of smoke from his cigarette. He was attired in a shirt of soft cloth, new corduroys and light pac boots, while a cap of gray material was on his head. His thin, light mustache was sharp at the ends, and, altogether, he seemed a superior being to the rivermen who handled the paddles.

There was something slightly bored about the attitude with which Harold Rodgers, vice president of the Rodgers Lumber Company and son of the head of the firm, viewed the river banks. To him that changing panorama of slopes and flats, of forest and steep landslips, of tier on tier of cliffs crowned with banksian pines and birch seemed monotonous. At least, that was what he told the canoemen repeatedly, and a canoe was such a primitive mode of travel where one good road would have opened access to the entire region. Just once he had been aroused during the entire hundred and fifty miles of upstream paddling. That was to try a long shot at a moose cow that had come down with her ungainly calf to the water.

He'd misjudged the distance and they were gone into the forest before he could fire again.

Perhaps a hundred yards behind came the second canoe and Paul Lemier was in the stern while a hulking lout of a man paddled in the prow.

Piled in this second craft and covered with a canvas tarpaulin were bags and boxes. As the first canoe approached the landing another craft, the wide, uneven type of native make, appeared from beneath some overhanging willows above the landing. In the bottom of it lay an open book. Stewart inclined slightly forward and the craft drifted ahead under the slow sweep of the paddle. A few more slow strokes and he had intercepted the leading canoe.

"Aren't you looking for Miss Mason?" he asked.

The canoeman in the prow stared at him stolidly, as though this was something of import that necessitated a gathering of thoughts to understand.

Rodgers was sitting erect in the canoe now. Only a few yards separated him from this man who had suddenly come into the picture.

"I am Harold Rodgers," he said slowly, "of the Rodgers Lumber Company. Yes, I am looking for Miss Edith Mason."

The tall, dark man in the other canoe studied him a moment. Then he looked at the second craft that was nearing and saw Lemier.

"You have come too far," he said. "The most accessible way to her cabin is to land at that bend down below; Lemier knows very well where it is."

"Lemier told us the easiest way to carry these things in would be along the trail from this landing, although it's a little longer, and this fellow, Stewart, who tries to run things up here might attempt to interfere," Rodgers said.

"I am John Stewart," the other said.

Rodgers looked at him sharply.

"Yes?" he said. "I've heard a good deal of you and rather unpleasantly." His voice rose slightly in a hard manner. "Miss Mason has told me about you in her letters and about the manner in which you have impeded her work in the same way that you interfered with my father. That is one of the reasons for my presence here—I want to see you."

"Well, I am here," said Stewart.

"I am not accustomed to being addressed in that manner," Rodgers said.

Lemier brought the second canoe close until its prow touched Stewart's. The riverman's paddle was in the water and worked slowly, forcing Stewart's canoe sideward and threatening constantly to overturn it. It was a deliberately offensive thing, unimportant but bothersome and Stewart was kept maneuvering to save an upset.

A perceptible change had come over Rodgers, a lowering of the eyebrows as though in superior annoyance.

"You have been a pest in this region," he said, "but you'll find that I'll not temporize with you as my father and Miss Mason have done. Your bullying and interfering have got to end."

A strange smile came over Stewart's face, a smile that did not reach the eyes. His voice was quiet.

"Yes?" he said simply.

"You seem to be rather impertinent, too," Rodgers said. "But I might have expected that. You'll find that it don't pay with me, for I'm going to call your bluff, Stewart, and have a show-down with you. I'll see if we can't put an end to your tactics here and make you stop your damned meddling."

"You would probably use rather effective and thorough methods," Stewart said as though giving voice to inner thoughts. Then he went on.

"You say Miss Mason told you about me in her letters—did she also suggest that it might be easy to make me and the people at this settlement submit by bringing pressure to bear through the posts? Down at Black House they have orders that I'm to be treated as an outlaw."

"My personal correspondence with Miss Mason is none of your business," Rodgers retorted, and

Stewart's paddle dug in violently as the canoe swayed far to one side, impelled by the prow of Lemier's craft which had shoved suddenly forward. Lemier took another deliberate stroke before Stewart could recover and the canoe lurched as Stewart half arose, leaping as it upset. His head and shoulders crashed against the craft in which Rodgers sat and it, too, turned over, hurling out Rodgers, his two paddlers and some packets and bags. As Stewart disappeared in the water there was the red of blood on his forehead where it had struck the prow of Rodgers' canoe.

There was a lashing about in the water and Rodgers appeared, standing on the bottom, his head and shoulders above the surface. The two canoemen were up, also, and had grasped their overturned craft and the paddles. Then came Stewart and he seemed unsteady. One hand raised out of the water and went to his forehead where the blood ran down as Lemier brought the remaining canoe close with a swift drive and raised his paddle to strike.

Stewart saw the blow coming and tried to throw himself to one side to avoid it, raising his arm, but the sharp edge of the blade found his shoulder and he went down, his head disappearing beneath the surface. Again Lemier lifted the paddle and peered into the water. Viciously he lunged and struck another

glancing blow on the shoulder as Stewart came up right at the center of the canoe, holding one arm up weakly to protect his head. Unsteady at best, the canoe rocked dangerously from the contact of his body against it and the force of that partly missed lunge of Lemier's sent it over, while paddles and men went hurtling into the river.

Unsteadily Stewart turned toward the shore where Rodgers was just emerging from the water. Once Stewart looked back in dazed fashion and saw Lemier appear. There was a sheath knife in the hand that broke the surface of the water as he plunged after Stewart who wavered and stumbled as he sought to attain the bank, then stopped, a look of resignation on his face, and braced to meet the attack as Lemier closed. There was a slight reddening of the water and both fell in the shallows.

Stewart came up, staggering, and his shirt hung from the left shoulder where a red gash appeared. He fell back another step toward shore and braced again for the onslaught as Lemier surged up, spitting water and gasping, the knife gone from his hand.

His eyes were like those of a maddened animal and his head came forward as he advanced again through the water toward Stewart, but the voice of Rodgers came commandingly.

"Lemier!"

The riverman looked and saw that Rodgers turned and indicated the open space above where there were the marks of habitation, the cabin of Lalonge visible on the hillside above through the tree-tops. Obviously there might be others here who would understand what happened even if they did not see.

Lemier turned sullenly toward Stewart like some beast of the forest deprived of its prey, hesitated, then went to the other canoeman who had been hurled into the water with him and together they brought the upturned craft in.

Stewart attained the bank. There was blood on his forehead and the shoulder where Lemier's knife had ripped away the shirt. For a moment he swayed and his hand went to the lump on his forehead. Then he steadied as Rodgers came toward him. Plainly the effects of that blow on the head were wearing off and strength had returned quickly to that superb body conditioned by the wilderness.

Rodgers was a bedraggled sight and shivered, for the river was cold.

One of the canoemen who had been in the craft with Rodgers, a heavy, dark-bearded man, was at his side and the second only a pace in back, but now Stewart did not give ground. Instead he came a step closer and the canoeman at Rodgers' side came forward as though to intercept him.

There was a mounting of color on the face of Rodgers. His lips trembled angrily.

"Do you realize that in those canoes you upset were food and other necessities for Miss Mason? What is she going to do now?"

There was something unbelievably swift about the motion of Stewart as he reached out. His hand seemed barely to touch the shoulder of the canoeman who had stepped in front of Rodgers but he went reeling to fall among the shallows at the river's edge where he arose to his hands and knees, an expression of mute rage on his face, as Lemier and the huge lout who had brought their canoe to shore came running heavily to the side of Rodgers. Stewart faced them all and there were quick lightnings in his eyes.

"Let her do the same as I and these other people here will have to do if we are unable to get things from the traders," he said. "Whoever was responsible for those orders didn't worry much about us."

He looked from one to another of them and there was an inviting challenge to each. The blood had smeared one side of his face and his arm was red down to the elbow. The one he had hurled into the river was up and there were five of them, but he faced them without indication that he knew the odds

were heavy. At last Rodgers cast a quick glance about.

"You're as courageous as hell—right in your own back yard, aren't you?" he said.

Stewart did not answer and there was a moment of tense silence. Then Rodgers turned away and his canoemen followed. Motionless, Stewart stood watching as their canoes were righted and some of the boxes and bags that had been tied in and thus saved from floating off were shifted about, a number of them that were useless after the wetting thrown overboard. Then the five men embarked and paddled down river close to the shore line.

Once Rodgers looked back and called, "You'll hear more from me."

Stewart was silent, and as they disappeared his head shook slowly. He wiped the blood from his eye and there was a troubled expression on his face.

In back of him the brush parted and an Indian appeared, clad in the high larigans of the native. He was tall and slender, his hair cropped short and his features were strong. In his hands was a rifle, held in an attitude of readiness, the finger still on the trigger.

Stewart heard the slight rustle of the brush and turned, surprised. He saw the rifle and understood. Then his head shook slowly again.

"Not that, Oowakano," he said. "Never that. It would do no good and would only mean more trouble."

The Indian came to his side.

"Oowakano has seen," he said. "In the pocket of the one with the hairy lip was a pistol. Once I thought he would use it when you threw the other back in the river. Then would I shoot him in the arm as we shoot the wounded grizzly to stop his rush."

He looked at the shoulder of Stewart.

"The one with whom you fought in the water held a knife," he said simply.

Stewart nodded and looked at the shoulder. The wound was not deep.

"These are of the people from whom this woman came?" the Indian asked.

"Yes," Stewart said, and noted the change of expression that was on the face of the Indian.

"What is it, Oowakano?" he asked. "Since I've come back I have seen that something is heavy on you. Have we not always been as blood brothers since we were small together?"

The Indian smiled one of those rare smiles. He hesitated, then spoke.

"The heart of Oowakano is heavy," he said. "The flowers are gone from the woods."

Stewart stepped close to him, facing him, and his hand was on the Indian's shoulder.

"My friend, I thought I understood thoroughly," he said, "but I did not know that you felt so strongly. To me it had always seemed that Violet Lalonge was a child and that the seven or eight seasons that were between us made us old in her eyes. She was little and beautiful like the wood violets under the trees after which she was called. Then, when this other woman came, I saw that a woman who was one of us, one of my people and one of your people, who understood us, would answer many of our needs. Such a one could teach the children of our people as my mother taught you and me when we were boys together. That is why I sent Violet Lalonge down to the school in the States where people that I knew when I went there to study would watch over her. Also, that is why I taught her and you also these past few years, for I have hopes that you, too, Oowakano, will help me in the leadership of our people, whether they are red or white. Together we must show them the way to things that are better."

"That I know as you have told me," the Indian said, "but it does not answer the thing that is in my heart, the thing which tells me that when she returns she will be as this other woman from the city and I—I will be Oowakano, the trapper. The years will be long and they will change her."

There was a clouding of Stewart's face as he spoke.

"In the spring when the streams are open again she will come back," he said. "She wanted to go and it is best. She wanted to learn things that I could not teach her in order that she might train the children. Then our people here will send them to her instead of to this other woman and we will know that she is teaching them the things which they should learn instead of making them discontented by telling them they would be better and happier if their parents would give up their homes here and go to live elsewhere.

"And you forget that you have learned many things, Oowakano, that the books which you have read have taught you much and will teach you more during the long days when we shall be together now. You forget that you have come far with me and that you must go much farther for I need you, and the day will come when you must leave the trap lines altogether to help me in the things that I am working to do. In you and Violet Lalonge only, of all these people have I seen any chance of real support and understanding, of help. It is better so and Violet Lalonge will not change more than you will change. I did not know how to teach her more, for she is a woman and I do not understand women, but you are a man and we will work together."

There was affection in the gesture with which he

took the hand of the Indian. Then he turned and led off where a barely discernible opening through the woods that clothed the side of the hill might have been merely a game trail. Oowakano followed. A few steps and they were swallowed up by the forest. Not a sound indicated the recent presence of human beings. From a birch a shadowy thing floated downward at an angle. It was a dusky, brownish streak with fawn-tinted grayish under-parts. It landed against an aspen poplar and looked around with little jerks of the head, a mountain flying squirrel. Then it climbed rapidly up to launch into another flight.

CHAPTER X

ON a crude bench built of hewn planks before the cabin in which Edith Mason had established her domicile here in the north she sat with two small children. Little feet and legs were bare and there were scratches that went unheeded. One was a girl of perhaps seven and her big, unblinking eyes stared at this wondrously beautiful creature that read to them out of a book. The other was the dark-hued child of Jackson the whiskey runner. His scrawny arms had rounded and his hollow cheeks filled. There was something different about him now, something that told strongly of ample food and contentment, even happiness. Occasionally he stirred restlessly and fixed attention on various things, fairly bubbling over with the sheer animal energy of boyhood. The passing of a few days with the hunger cravings of his young body appeased had worked a miracle.

As Edith Mason read, her thoughts strayed and she wondered at this child. This was the third consecutive day he had come to her. An old Indian whose name was Netawis brought him at first and told her in dignified manner and broken words that he would have her teach this child of his so that its wisdom would be great even as that of Stewart, and she had marvelled at many things. She had tried to explain

that Stewart's wisdom was not great and saw that it was useless, saw that the wrinkled red man looked at her as though he did not understand. She was not angry at the absolute devotion he revealed toward Stewart. It was a little pathetic because she understood so much more that this Indian did not. Perhaps she admired him a little for it, too, for it was supreme loyalty. Plainly to him Stewart represented an ideal. What a pity that the power of this man among these people had not been thrown to their aid in the same way she would have used it. Somehow it made her sad, and she felt a great regret that Stewart himself had not been able to understand, or, understanding, had not been big enough to cast aside personal ambitions, whatever they were, and help.

She had studied this old Indian, too, and wondered, for the boy was plainly only a half blood. It had been difficult to earn the confidence of the child but this third morning she had gleaned from him a story that was revolting to finer sensibilities, the story of his father and of how Oowakano and Violet Lalonge had taken him away. He could not understand, but from the things he told her she gathered that Stewart had consented to Netawis taking him as his own son on condition that he should come to her to be taught. It was barbarous to think of that old man with his squaw who was probably almost as ancient having

the care of a child with white blood in its veins. Stewart had no right to separate a child from its parent. It was a brutal thing. It seemed that there was no limit to what he would do. He had driven the child's father away and given it to a savage to rear. Why did people submit to such tyrannies when they had only to speak to stop them! Why did Stewart resort to such extremes? She would have done differently, would have tried to teach him how to care for the boy and the meaning of duty. Here was a case where she might have been of some real help if she had only been given the opportunity. Why wouldn't Stewart see!

Suddenly Edith was aware that the attention of the children was attracted down the gently sloping hillside where the trail from the river came out through the trees. She looked up. There came a number of men, five of them. Their wet clothing clung tightly to their bodies. Four of them carried boxes or bags. The first was Lemier and in back of him came a heavily built man with a black beard. Then she saw Harold Rodgers. His head was bare and his hair disheveled. He carried nothing.

Edith closed her book and went hurriedly to meet them, the children fled precipitately around the edge of the cabin and off toward the woods like wild things suddenly startled.

"Harold, I'm so glad to see you," she said as Rodgers came forward with extended hand while the rest went on toward the other cabin where MacIntosh appeared, "but what has happened?"

"We met Stewart," Rodgers said, annoyance in his voice, "and he objected to our landing—objected rather strenuously, I should say. He not only deliberately upset us but ruined half of the supplies you had asked for. Why, he's nothing but a savage brute, Edith! You cannot remain here to combat a man like that."

Impulsive anger came to the girl as he told her of the clash on the river, with certain very important details left out. She led Rodgers toward her cabin. This was the most offensive thing Stewart had done. It was a direct blow at her.

"This is beyond all bounds, Harold," she said. "I hardly thought he'd go to such extremes. What reason, what purpose could he have in being such a cad? Surely there must be some way of stopping him."

"Yes, but you'll find it's not a woman's job, Edith," Rodgers said, "and I'm determined that you shall not stay here."

"Certainly I shall, Harold," the girl said. "He must be curbed and defeated. After this any withdrawal on my part will only strengthen him and make

it seem as though he has bullied us into submission. He'll not beat us, Harold!"

Her chin was high, her little lips tight and high color was in her face. She seemed very beautiful. Rodgers looked admiringly at her. After a moment's silence her attention was attracted to the fact that he shivered.

"Oh, Harold, excuse me," she said, and the anger faded in a quick little laugh. "You are wet and cold and you'll have to change. I was so angry I didn't think. Go up to the cabin there with MacIntosh and the others. You can borrow some of his things, and hurry. I want to talk to you so badly. He can build a fire up there and dry the others."

Rodgers started to demur and took her hand again.

"That can wait," he said. "I'm so mighty glad to be with you again."

But the girl was insistent and he followed the others to the far side of the clearing. A few moments later he returned and the boots loaned by MacIntosh, the heavy corduroys, even the shirt he wore, were all too large.

To Edith this was a welcome visit after weeks on weeks spent here with these crude inhabitants. It was almost like going back for a brief time to the things she had been used to and there were hours of talk about her mother and friends, about the city and other things. She'd heard from her mother every other

week when Lemier was dispatched forward with her mail which was sent in care of the Rodgers Lumber Company's mills down the river. And she'd heard from Harold Rodgers, too, and had expected him, had looked forward eagerly to his arrival, but that was not like seeing and talking to him again.

The afternoon waned and evening approached, the long, fragrant evening of the northern summer. In the willows below the clearing there was the twittering of birds and the bark of a fox in the forest, while the sharp scolding of a red squirrel told of trouble among the affairs of the little folk of the wilderness. The moon was up before daylight faded and Rodgers started at a weird, moaning sound that came from the forest.

"That's one of the great horned owls," she said. "He's discovered that Wenusk has his den in those stones up there at the edge of the clearing. In fact, Wenusk is rearing a whole family up there and I've had a lot of fun watching them."

Again she laughed.

"Wenusk is the woodchuck. You see, I'm learning a lot of things from these children who come over occasionally, and from MacIntosh. I don't know what I'd have done without him. It was wonderful of you to send Carlson orders turning him over to me. You've no idea how interesting it all is, learn-

ing about the birds and the animals and how they rear their families. Why, this whole region seems to be a paradise for them. I never dreamed there were so many kinds in the world. And these children know all about them. It would surprise you."

"But what good does it do them?" Rodgers asked. "What good can it do them if they're to remain here all their lives and never make any progress? They're little better than savages."

The girl puckered up her mouth.

"I'd not say that," she objected. "You would get a surprise there, too. They are not decadent in any way. Really, they are ruggedly wholesome and it is wonderful to know that you can bring their best qualities out if you are willing to fight hard enough. And it is a fight, for Stewart is a real power among them. In some ways he must be tremendous. Sometimes it is hard to be patient with them for submitting to him. Their attitude toward him is an odd mixture. Some of them fear him and others simply worship him. You can feel his personality through them and you simply can't determine whether it is sinister or merely dumb, brute power. It is only through personal contact with him that you realize he is intelligent. There are a lot of times when it is awfully lonesome and discouraging."

Rodgers moved closer to her on the bench and his eyes searched her face.

"Edith," he said, softly, "why stay here any longer? Come back with me. Marry me. I've asked you a dozen times. This is no place for a woman like you—this really isn't a woman's fight. A woman does not understand how to handle a situation like this, a man like Stewart. There are ways of which a woman knows nothing and those are the only ways to cope with his kind. Father has been too patient."

The girl looked at him quickly, searchingly, and interrupted.

"What do you mean, Harold?" she asked. "How else could it be handled? How else could you cope with Stewart and why has your father been too patient with him? You told me yourself before I came up here that Stewart was just a stubborn brute and that your father couldn't buy him out. After all, why should he? We are not interested in Stewart. We're interested in doing something really worth while for these people he dominates. We merely want to break his hold on them, to show them that they have nothing to fear from him and that they would be far better off if they repudiated him. We want to give them a church and a school and get them to see the wisdom of better living standards even if they refuse to leave these hills and mountains to take up

farming in the valleys, where their children can have all the advantages far more readily."

There was silence between them a moment, then Rodgers spoke in a protesting tone.

"But, Edith, girl, why should you give up any more time to it? You can easily employ someone else to take up the work and I'll hire as many as you want. You don't belong here. You don't fit into the setting. Won't you come back with me? After we're married I'll return to our mills and establish a headquarters from which we can maintain some professional mission workers up here. I don't propose to be balked in everything by this—this crude person, this hulking brute of a woodsman and his Indian klooch."

Edith looked at him.

"What do you mean—klooch?" she asked.

Rodgers hesitated and seemed slightly embarrassed.

"Why—that is—Lemier tells me he makes a sweetheart of an Indian girl named Lalonge," he said.

Edith felt a nauseating sensation. That this could be the case she had tried hard not to believe despite all indications. Rodgers drew closer. His voice was low.

"I'm going to beat him, Edie. I'm going to win this fight and you might be the first to surrender. It would give me a flying start and make me all the

more anxious to win out for your sake. I can't, I won't let you remain here in this horrible place any longer, living among these barbarians."

The girl looked at him and smiled.

"But it isn't a horrible place, Harold," she said, "and they're not barbarians. It's a beautiful place. I've really learned to love it, the majesty of it. Sometimes it just fills my soul, and, Harold, there are moments when I can understand why these people do not want to leave here. Of course, they must, for they'd be so much better off settled down on farms."

She was silent a moment, then went on.

"I'm not making any real sacrifice here, Harold. I've come to a better understanding that service is the noblest thing in life. Oh, Harold, you've no idea how much I want to help these people. It's the biggest, the best thing I've ever tried to do. It's come to mean so much to me. If you could only see these little children, how they respond and develop like beautiful flowers. I couldn't—I wouldn't leave it now."

"Edith. . . ."

But the girl lifted one hand and slowly shook her head.

"I'm afraid you're merely putting me on my mettle—you and Stewart," she said. "You'd better run along now, Harold, over to MacIntosh's cabin. There

are plenty of bunks over there. You must be tired after that long trip up river, and I'm tired, too."

Rodgers arose.

"Won't you, Edie—come back with me?"

Again the girl shook her head negatively and entered the darkened doorway of her cabin as Rodgers departed. He reached the other cabin and disappeared. Then she came out and returned to her seat on the bench. A long time she sat there, elbows resting on knees, chin in hand, and there were new thoughts, thoughts that were not altogether clear. They seemed dark. The words of Rodgers recurred constantly and they seemed jumbled with strange meaning. What other ways could there be to cope with a man like Stewart—ways that a woman could not understand?

Overhead the moon shone down softly like faint beams gleaming through the stained windows of some vast cathedral, diffused glow in a sacred place. The wilderness seemed gentle, calm, but a new note was entering and she could not fathom it. There, on all sides, was the dark band of the forest, and, somehow, to-night it did not seem to understand, to offer her comfort as it had so often in the days past when her spirit was low, when she felt beaten and discouraged. Rather, to-night, it was as though it distrusted her, held back from her. She slowly looked about to all sides. Once she thought of the thing

Rodgers had told her about Stewart and Violet Lalonge. The Indian girl was fair. It was revolting. Any power, any belief and honesty, was unthinkable in such a man. At last she arose and entered the cabin.

CHAPTER XI

A SOFT wind curled over the heights and the tips of the firs bent slightly as though bowing to the spirit of the wilderness passing over. There was warmth in the morning sun but in the shrubbery and brush were indications of an impending change. The leaves of the bearberry were curling slightly and here on the higher levels where the myrtle willow was a mere trailing shrub there were brownish tints to its tiny foliage. The caribou bulls that had retreated to the upper benches and plateaus with the advent of spring, to sulk and hide at the first itching about the pedicles, were seen more often, sleek, grayish creatures, magnificent once again with their great coronets of curving antlers. They were of the woodland species and summered high in the mountains while their more nomadic kin, the barren ground caribou, went far north to the vast open tundras of the barrens.

Bird life seemed enormous, unbelievable, as the new broods flitted about in reckless abandon, their flight muscles growing far stronger as the season progressed. The woods were a riot of color and even the most insatiable of the killers, the wolverene, the weasel, the western mink and the beautiful orange-throated marten, were sluggish. Once again nature

had brought the new cycle of life into being, reared it to maturity and was tired by her own effort.

There was something intangible, a subtle change at work. Occasionally there were flights of the snow geese and on these more southerly streams a pair of red-throated loons were in evidence here and there, often with the two young that they hatched each season on some tiny lake at the very edge of the forest belt in the shadow of the borealis.

That subtle change extended further. There were more definite physical manifestations. Among the rabbits the white hue of the feet was extending higher and now, for some reason, they were seen less frequently. Occasionally a wolf might come out along the river banks in daytime, a thing almost unheard of during the summer months.

But the breeze that played over the heights was soft and the sun held a rich measure of warmth. The forested slopes were a gorgeous panorama of tints.

On the mountainside where it broadened out into a small, flat bench formation perhaps twenty feet in width and clear of vegetation, Stewart emerged from what might have been a game trail except that close examination would have revealed it was worn too wide. Once he looked back into the forest and whistled. A moment later a dog appeared, sharp-eared, and dark of hue with slatish gray patches of

hair. It had the head of the husky with a cross of the wolf ancestry, the broad, powerful jowls that told of great biting muscles. There were other evidences also of the wolf cross, the slanted eyes and hind quarters lower than the withers. Its tail hung low in back at a sharp angle.

The dog squatted on its haunches close to Stewart as he stood looking out over the great valley between the mountains. Unconsciously he breathed deeper. That was a gorgeous view; human eyes could not measure the magnificence of it. The slopes fell away deep, thickly grown with forest and the bottoms had the appearance of some greenish brown ingrained carpeting of immeasurable dimensions. It was impossible to pick out one tree, one patch of growths or species. For miles on miles into interminable distance that rolling, undulating valley and slopes and heights mingled, and above all were the barren peaks, capped with white like gargantuan pearls on the breast of creation.

Far down in the valley was a silvered thread, heart's blood of the wild, going down to swell the river arteries. And above it at a spot where the rock jutted out sheer was a widening strip of white, a veil of it, a gossamer flung out from the mountainside. That was a waterfall. Often Stewart had been down to it. But now he stood quietly in sheer, pulsing, quick-

breathing adoration. This was the heritage of man that so few knew or cared about. It was not a physical appeal; it was deeper, reached to the soul of all that was beautiful. There was a purity about it that baffled intimacy of description, an awesome vastness as though the infinite revealed itself untouched, a vestal thing. Man might look upon it and die, knowing that he had seen the greatest secret of all life, the origin, the mother bosom from which it all had generated, energizing into being.

His eyes closed and opened slowly. For one brief moment he felt as one might feel sitting at the feet of God looking down on the world, and the next a humility of all that is mortal was upon him. He moved a few steps to some rocks and sat down and the gray dog arose and shambled close again, to stretch with head on paws and eyes closed to mere slits. Stewart looked down at it and a kindly smile came to his features. Then he leaned over and stroked its head, running his fingers behind its ears and down through the dark hair of its long mane. The dog's eyes opened slightly, then closed in perfect contentment.

A long time they remained there together quietly and were apparently content, and to Stewart many things were revealed from the hidden drama of the wild. Above the tree-tops in the valley he saw the

sharp zig-zagging flight of a red-tailed hawk and then the gray sweep as though of a shadow passing close behind it. But the hawk mounted fast, depending on sheer speed, and at last the owl which flies by day gave up the pursuit.

From the face of a steep cliff far up the mountainside two wide wings launched out into space and the bald eagle was off on the hunt. Stewart's eyes searched the rocky wall and found the tiny ledge where the eagle's mate sat motionless on the very rim, and he knew that young ones were there ready to dive off for the first soaring.

Among some birch poles on a hardwood ridge a few hundred yards off and below, something moved, and he saw a moose bull that pawed at the base of its new and heavy antlers. It started off down toward the lower levels, probably in search of a small pine, to rub the bark off and obtain the sap that eases the last stages of that itching which drives its kind almost to madness.

Stewart looked down at the dog again.

"After all, Sarge," he said, "the wilderness holds no secrets that it is unwilling to share."

The dog lifted its head and looked at him through half-closed eyelids, then crept a few inches closer and rested its long, sharp muzzle on its forepaws again.

Stewart smiled. To each man his dog must have

certain little intimacies that strike as amusing and Stewart spoke to the animal once more.

"I'll be leaving you soon, Sarge, old boy. Got to go out for a while. Can't do it all alone. May stop and see little Violet Lalonge. Violet, Sarge, you know who I mean well enough. She's the one that named you Sergeant Snooper when you were the funniest little ball of fur in the world and continually snooping into everything that wasn't intended for little pups to get into."

At mention of the girl's name the dog's ears came forward slightly more and its eyes opened again while Stewart looked away into the distance and that unseeing stare was evident.

Within him something seemed to grow. It was as though deeper courage and purpose came. And he needed that courage now, needed it as he had never felt the need of it before. This panorama of grandeur that opened in front, limitless, awe-inspiring, seemed to lend of its rugged strength. A few short hours before he had been upset by doubts that he knew must have been growing, mounting within him subconsciously over a long time. He had begun to wonder without acknowledging it to himself whether it was right that he should fight, whether purpose should be held so high, whether it had not been ordained that events must inevitably take their course.

There was no pride in the realization which came now that he was the pivot about which many forces were working, no lust for power in the knowledge that he was attempting to shape the destinies of these people who were his people. Was he right in all he had done? Could it be that he was seeking to combat the intended course of events, allowing his own ego to dominate himself and trying to force it on others?

Now he realized that for days, perhaps for weeks, such thoughts, such doubts had been growing on him. That might be weakness, loss of confidence in himself, and a few hours since it had become almost unbearable. He was fighting a great fight with himself. Always before when trouble beset him this spot had offered a haven where he turned instinctively to separate himself from all that was distracting. Here he would face anything alone; close to the primitive he could look into the innermost recesses of himself, measure the depths, balance the scales and clarify. And here also he could find simple relief in his God and himself as he found it now, looking out over the reaches of the wilderness where the Creator seemed very close, where simplicity of faith sufficed, where man could not be false to himself nor delude himself about his own purpose.

Now the eyes of John Stewart looked out but did not see, for his vision was turned inward on himself,

appraising relentlessly, coolly, searching to the depths of his soul to see whether there was one corner that might have housed an unworthy motive. Here it would out—for there could be no sham, no pretense in the presence of the infinite. Here only the simplest of codes could stand. It was as though at this spot on the mountainside far above the shelter of the forests and cabins, the soul of man was bared to the scrutiny of an omnipotent eye, as though any who came here must be prepared to be judged stripped of all excuse. Here Stewart could feel the presence of that power of the Creator. It was more tangible, nearer than he had ever known it to be elsewhere. Here man stood alone in the presence of his maker.

The doubts that had been growing within him, doubts of himself, of his people and his purpose seemed to melt away. The fullness of his purpose returned, the beacon of it for which he had sacrificed and given much now burned brighter than ever. And realization came that it would not matter greatly if he failed and lost, was beaten in his fight. At least, to him it would not matter much in its personal effect. But he could not lose, not so long as it was a fight for others.

Something of the strength that was of the wilderness, the great trees, the heavy crags, the breeze that came over the mountains grew within him again, sure-

ness, heightened purpose that had no self-considered motives. Why had he doubted? Now he could return to face it all again, go down into the world to carry on with confidence renewed in himself, with faith.

It might have been that an hour went by before he arose and went off over one side of the rocky bench, down a steep slope of the mountain where the brush grew thin. Perhaps a hundred feet below he was among the trees again and further on a small stream tumbled through a tiny gorge. Here and there along its sides were indications that the rock and earth had been disturbed. A long time Stewart spent moving from spot to spot, occasionally scooping up handfuls and then moving on while the dog followed patiently, evidently bored. Several times Stewart tucked bits of stone in his pocket and finally went off through the forest, back toward the river, climbing the intervening hill.

CHAPTER XII

NEAR the brow of the hill half a dozen game trails converged into one that was worn more deeply by the tread of many feet of the wild, the water trail that led at last down to the river. An elk cow, an early wanderer from the high plateaus, stirred slightly among the thickets at a faint approaching sound, and Stewart, breasting the hillside, looked about to all sides as a deep rumbling, barely audible, sounded in the chest of the great dog that shambled along at his heels.

He had been immersed in thought but the slightest manifestation of that life which weaves into the whole drama of the wild never failed to arouse him. He heard the slight sound of a tiny twig snapping, the faint swish of something that moved in the brush above and to one side, then he spoke a quieting word of command to the dog that had crouched and tensed as though ready to rush forward to the attack. It was some big animal. That he knew and surmised that it must be of an antlered species.

He was approaching that spot where the game trails converged in a glade that might have been the setting for some mystic, sacred rites of nature herself, when a low sound stopped him.

"Hoh!"

Oowakano stepped from behind some birch poles and Stewart smiled his greeting and held out one hand, palm upward, then joined the Indian who spoke.

"I knew that you came this way to the place that you like on the mountain, for the leaves were disturbed on this trail and there were the marks of the dog where the earth is soft."

"Oowakano, for your people the earth holds signs that we can never fully understand," Stewart said, "though we spend all our lives trying to learn."

The Indian was silent a moment, but there was a quick lighting of his eyes as though he had taken this compliment to himself.

"It is so," he said, "because our fathers and the fathers of our fathers have lived here when the fathers of the white men cared only for the cities of which you have told me—where all is stone and hard and there are few trees and animals, where the birds do not nest because they are afraid and there are no berries and seeds."

Abruptly he changed the subject.

"This morning I was troubled. I came to your cabin that we might talk as we talked often from when we were boys together and snared the rabbits, thinking we were mighty hunters. And I would talk also as we have talked many times since you went

away and came back after four winters had passed. Often I have not understood you since that time but your talk was good and as you showed me how to read better from the books I understood more.

"Stewart, I know that great trouble is upon you and I have made my prayer chant to the Manito as well as to the God of your people that my strength might help you. It can do no harm that I prayed to the two Gods, for the one who is God will understand that I did not speak false words."

Stewart's eyes met those of this dark-hued man and found all that is best in a human being. The Indian went on.

"My head was troubled and I walked along the path that turns down past the river where this woman from the city lives. I saw that she left her cabin and went up the hill and the man, MacIntosh, was with her. I followed hidden among the trees and they did not see me. When they came to the top of the hill he pointed and told her words and she went ahead alone and left him standing there. I saw then that she came toward your cabin and when I was sure that she went along the straight trail and would not be lost I came here to find you, for I knew that she would walk slow as a woman must who climbs the hills. She is not there yet and we may go back together for I am troubled and would speak of many things."

Stewart nodded and they went along the path with the dog following close.

"The spirit wind comes down the valleys now in the nights," Oowakano said, "and many things are changing. The winter that is coming will be bad, for I see the signs."

Stewart did not speak, but listened carefully. Throughout the years spent in the company of these people since boyhood he had learned to comprehend the circuitous, symbolic method of their speaking, a manner that Oowakano, who had been as close to him as a blood brother and whose very thoughts he had helped mold, had not overcome even when speaking in the English he understood so well.

"Since this woman has come among us," Oowakano went on, "trouble has grown up strongly among the people like the snow that is piled high into great drifts by the wind in winter so that you wonder at the magic of it. You do not see it piling but the drifts grow and grow. This trouble is in the hearts of the people for they are not contented. Some among them doubt the things you have said and think much of what this woman has told them."

In the eyes of Stewart smoldering fire seemed to be veiled and his lips were tight.

"So long as the furs were good and the posts welcomed them," the Indian went on, "there would

have been none to lift a voice against you, but in the time of the long snows that is to come I see there will be few and poor furs on the trap lines in the forest."

Stewart looked at him questioningly.

"It is the season that my people call the year of no rabbits," the Indian said. "My eyes see few of them, and among those that I have taken in the snares the yellow touch of the plague is under the skin by the neck."

There was a perceptible darkening of Stewart's face. These comparatively few words of this Indian for whom he felt so keen a sense of friendship opened new and troubled vistas. Many things he saw now, an unfolding series of happenings and conditions to come, all of which related to each other. There was no need for Oowakano to talk further. It all explained itself now.

The year of no rabbits meant a winter of unending terror in the woods, of frightfulness and starvation. At intervals of approximately seven years, although this varies greatly at times, comes this season when the rabbits become almost extinct, when that peculiar plague which affects no other living things wipes them out with the exception of a few hardy specimens that are untouched.

Then all of the balances of nature are cast into

chaos and frightfulness rules. The lynx which depends almost entirely upon the long-eared kind for food becomes a ravening killer. True, at such times it is most easily caught in the babiche snares where it freezes to death easily despite its soft fur if the weather be cold, but the fur is of little value due to the starved condition of the animal. In such seasons also the wolves pack more readily, the gray and black and bluish tinted runners of the forest aisles, sabre fanged cavalry of the wild that few among the natives will lift a hand against unless it come to a question of life or death.

Stewart understood that and had fought vainly to overcome the superstitions of those of Indian blood who believe that misfortune awaits the man who kills or skins a wolf. Repeatedly he had shown them that these were destroyers of all manner of game upon which they must themselves depend. Whenever opportunity offered he had shot the beasts and trapped them as had Lebeau and others among the whites who lived here.

That was a strong superstition and now the wolves would be driven to murderous limits that come only in the most terrific winters. The trap lines would be robbed systematically and the trapper himself frequently forced to battle for his life, sometimes in vain. And the more powerful game, too, would be

depleted, for these packs would not hesitate to assail the mightiest moose in their ravening blood lust, would willingly pay the terrific toll of half their number exacted by sharp antlers and mighty hoofs.

E-wed-sie, the mountain cougar, would come down, too, out of his fastness to join in the slaughter, and the marten would descend from his forest crests, would meet the weasel in the hidden runways of the smallest rodents and fight to the death for the right to kill that which both hunted.

Well enough Stewart knew all this and understood its relation to human existence and prosperity here. Of themselves the rabbits meant little to men from the standpoint of food, for it is a paradoxical thing that man can eat rabbits until he figuratively bursts, stuff himself to capacity a dozen times a day and slowly starve to death for lack of real nourishment, while the meat eaters of the animal realm thrive on such a diet.

All these things went through the mind of Stewart now as he walked with Oowakano along the game trail through the forest toward his own cabin, and it seemed that at last Nature also had arrayed herself against him. Indirectly, through these people who were his people, she was striking a very definite blow against him. They would have a season of few furs and poor ones, to be followed by another season when they

would be reduced to the bare necessities of life. Their trade at the post where they had always been accustomed to trading was cut off and no credits would be extended them.

It seemed that his lips became tighter still, a mere thin line, and his jaw muscles bulged while there was a dark scowl in his eyes. How could he expect them to retain confidence in him in the face of all these things when Rodgers held out an alluring offer of life that was painted for them as being far easier, if they would merely give up these lands that were theirs in exchange? And that matter of banishing them from trade at the only post they had ever known except that old one of his father, seemed a despicable thing. There was added grimness to that fighting spirit which was dominant in Stewart. There were other posts, the establishments of big companies. There was the Alexis Creek station and the Bay Company's post at Babine Lake, but they were much further away, much more inaccessible with long overland journeys that meant many miles of tiresome packing in summer, tremendous journeys with the dog sleds in winter. But at those posts they would find fair dealing and there Rodgers and his power of money could not interfere, for the big companies had built up on a basis of confidence and honesty and would play no favorites.

His fight now would be harder. Let it be so. Let Nature side with those who were seeking to drag him down. He felt now as he knew the bull moose must feel when it is surrounded by the big hunting pack and holds toward them a mighty crest bowed only to thrust them back, to crush and batter them to the last. It was a bitter thing and slowly came the realization that instead of being tired of it all, instead of weakening under this freshened, renewed strength of opposition, he welcomed the fight of it. He'd stand up to it, meet it blow for blow and something must give way somewhere, somehow. For him there could be no defeat. The time when that could happen was long past. He was fighting now for the honor of a man, himself, fighting for the children among these people who would have deserted him and turned him over to the enemy.

The Indian had been silent. Perhaps he understood what was going on in Stewart's mind. They had been long together through the years and there was an immeasurable depth of comprehension between them that often surpassed the need for words. Stewart spoke to him now.

"Oowakano, it seems that there is a circle that is drawing closer about me, about us, for you have given me much strength. I believe the time has come when it would be wise to obtain help elsewhere. You know

that I went out from here once before and was gone down to the land of cities for a long time so that I could be better fitted to carry out the work that I have told you of. You know how I toiled each day and night and studied out of books at the big school, even during the hot months when other men gave up their work, so that I might learn faster. For a long time I thought I should be able to do everything alone without outside help. But my thoughts have changed now and I shall go back to the cities soon and talk with men who have much money and greater power than Rodgers. I know now where these things are I sought in the ground. These others will help us and we shall share with them even as you share with the man who helps on the trap lines when there are more traps than you can attend to yourself. That is better than to risk losing all."

The Indian spoke laconically.

"That is good."

"But before I do that I shall go down to the post at Alexis Creek to open credits there for myself and any others among us who want them," Stewart said.

They were at the top of the hill and before them the forest fell away to a broad cleared space on the sheltered hillside where the large cabin of Stewart stood close to the woods, with an open space of several acres partly under cultivation on all sides.

CHAPTER XIII

THROUGH the thoughts of Edith Mason came realization that a little less than three short months ago she never would have dared brave this path through the forest alone, but now it did not seem strange and she wondered about the vague fears that would have beset her then. A fox would have made her halt, trembling, and the knowledge that there were such childhood terrors as bears in these woods and such monsters as moose, even wolves, would have brought terror to her.

Now she smiled when she recalled those fears and it was as though she who understood smiled at another person reassuringly. She had learned much and saw things from a greatly different viewpoint. Now she realized that if a fox came across her it would probably almost die in its fright, a bear might stop for a second look before hieing to other parts as quickly as possible and a moose would snort its disgust at being interrupted in its feeding and then go crashing off to where such discourteous intruders did not disturb. As for the wolf, perfectly well she understood that it would go skulking on its way, far more anxious to remain hidden than any of the others.

Only the littler forest folk and the birds would find

their inquisitiveness paramount and would sit trembling and noiseless to watch. She was used to them now and found something pathetically amusing about them and their ways.

She had no hesitation. MacIntosh had told her that this path led directly to the home of Stewart and all that was necessary was to keep on the main trail and disregard any diverging game paths. It was a matter of perhaps three miles—not much more, and probably a little over a mile in a direct line. But forest trails do not go in direct lines.

Once or twice before she had thought strongly, not of Stewart so much as whether she should go to him and appeal to him again, more strongly than she had that day by the river, try to reason with him. But it seemed always that he had made such a course impossible when he had not come to her to offer his power over these people to help her in what she sought to achieve, also when he'd implied dishonest motives that day of their meeting, and then again by the way he had treated Harold Rodgers, who had gone back after those few days of uselessly entreating her to return with him.

But in some degree her anger at Stewart had ebbed, and at last she fell to wondering whether she had not made a mistake, realizing how great his influence was, not to have concentrated her efforts on

him at first. If she had brought him around to seeing how worthy her intentions were it would have certainly been far easier with the others. But she had not realized then how great his influence was, what a tremendously powerful hold-back to her plans he could be.

It was while Harold Rodgers was with her that she finally saw clearly. It might have been his words that made her see. He'd said the rest would be easy if Stewart was out of the way, and she had remonstrated strongly at the possibilities of such a double meaning.

But now she was determined to see Stewart, to talk to him as she had never talked to him before, to explain and demand explanations. The only repulsive thought about it had to do with what Rodgers had told her of Stewart and Violet Lalonge. No wonder his interest was so great in the Indian girl.

Several times she stopped to rest from the effort of climbing around the brow of the hill and fell to thinking. It would be well to prepare her lines of attack. She was deep in these thoughts when she emerged at last in a place where the trail widened out. The forest ended and in the clearing she saw the cabin that must be the home of the man she sought. It was a big place, evidently of three rooms and she saw that in a large area free of stumps,

cultivated things were growing. There was a porch; over it grew a mass of Douglas honeysuckle heavy with clusters of the coral-red berries. At one end of the cabin, the southern end, a clump of wild roses had been brought to a stage of larger blooms and deeper hue by care. At the ends of the rose bed were two clumps of fireweed, in full, gorgeous purple flower.

Edith Mason was conscious of something unlooked for about the very appearance of the place. There was a trim beauty of setting that was altogether unexpected. She looked around the edges of the clearing and received a further surprise. This was not mere wild brush that grew at the edge of the forest.

There were shrub cranberry trees, the pembina with its bunches of orange-red fruit, now overripe and fading, from which the Indians make a rich sauce; the buffalo berry which is a tonic for the digestive system; the serviceberry and currant and raspberry bushes.

What had first seemed a maze of brush revealed itself as separate clumps of a variety of fruit bearing bushes, some of which she would not have recognized a year previous. But the children loved them and had led her to spots in the woods where they grew and from them she had learned. This was amazing and there were additional surprises. In that cultivated space at regular intervals were a few young

trees set far apart, red cherry trees that grew commonly throughout the forest and which were obviously being cultivated here.

That cultivated space also—why, it was like an expert's garden. There were potatoes and beets and other things and not a weed.

An interruption came when a man appeared out of the forest above and a huge, gray patched dog followed close at his heels.

She saw that it was Stewart and he approached her with long strides.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," he said. "I scarcely expected you here so soon."

She studied him keenly. How had he known she was coming, or was he merely joking?

Once there was a low rumbling sound in the huge chest of the dog but it quieted at a word from the man and squatted close to his boots, looking at the girl with an unblinking gaze that was annoying. Somehow, she felt that here was something more menacing than anything in the woods and it made her uncomfortable.

"Won't you come to the porch, or inside?" Stewart asked. "You'll find it more comfortable than standing here."

She was conscious that immediately he had put himself in the superior position and his words had

the sound of one who invites an unwelcome business caller to have it over with.

She hesitated and he led to the porch and threw open the door to the cabin so that she could enter or at least see inside where three windows in the room gave ample light. The instincts of a woman held true as she looked in and saw the big fireplace of stones, the well-made table and two large chairs, the seats of which were covered with skins. The hide of a black bear was made into a rug on the wooden floor and along the wall on one side were four long shelves filled with books. By one of the windows was a shelf-like table on which were a retort, test tubes of various sizes and other odds and ends that she knew but vaguely and marvelled at finding here.

He stood at ease on the porch, tall, dark, waiting, and Edith acknowledged to herself that he held the upper hand in the opening skirmish and had gone to no trouble to make her position easier.

"This will do," she said. "I've come to see you to talk things over again. I've been thinking for some time that perhaps if I could just discuss everything with you and if you'd start with an open mind, unprejudiced, you might change your attitude. Perhaps it's me. Probably I lack the ability to make myself, my plans, my hopes clear. Sometimes I think surely

you'd be big enough to help if you understood and trusted me. I know you would because you owe it to yourself to be honest with yourself and with these others."

She saw a sudden lighting of his dark eyes, noted that his lips compressed slightly, then he smiled.

"Honest with myself?" he said. "Knowing the things you know you say that to me! Coming here for the purpose you did—you can talk of honesty?"

Immediately she knew that his defense had been long and carefully prepared, that she could hope for little of sympathy and understanding from him. She felt a sense of humiliation that she had come to him in this way to appeal for his help and have it refused. It was hard to press down her anger, to keep from telling him just how monstrous a thing he was doing by holding back the progress of these people. She felt as a crusader trying to batter a way through for the light. She spoke more slowly, the eagerness gone.

"At least," she went on, "you might stop opposing me at every turn. It seems that I've been foolish to expect your aid. If there had been any hope of that you'd have seen long ago that I was trying to do something worth while for these people, and you would have helped if their interests were really in your heart."

"It seems to me this is a useless discussion," he said. "So far as the purpose of it is concerned, I understand; and we talked it over before, that day by the river."

"But you don't understand," Edith said. "I am not seeking anything for myself. I really don't want any favors from you. All I want you to do, all I'm asking of you is to release the holds you have on these people, on some of them, anyhow. You are a hold-back and a weight on them for your own selfish ends."

She was breathing more rapidly; there was a flush of zeal on her face.

"If you could only know," she went on, "if you could only understand what the rest of the world beyond the narrowness of this wilderness means, if you could just get one glimpse of it in its bigness you would hang your head in shame at your efforts to hold down these people you call your people."

Stewart looked at her and his glance was steady, unwavering. He did not speak. At last she went on.

"Can't you see? If it is power you want money will give you that power and Mr. Rodgers and myself will pay you to leave, to get out of here."

He started and she saw a swift mounting of color. Then his face paled and he turned away from her,

looking toward the path up which she had come where it entered the clearing from the forest.

"Do you really think I am a fool or a mercenary who can be bought, or are you merely trying to be as insulting as possible?" he said, and to the girl it was cold, a thrust more cruel than a blow. It tore at her pride to be humbled thus by such a man. Her lip trembled momentarily and she looked at him. Then she walked down off the porch. There was a tenseness about her voice.

"I have tried to combat you fairly," she said, "but you hardly seem to understand what fairness is, and for the sake of these others I'm going to meet your power with power, I'm going to fight it out with you on your own field. In order to show you and these people whom you dominate that I have weapons, too, I've stopped your trade at Black House, and the others also. Perhaps you've found that out. If not, you will discover that hereafter you cannot obtain anything there and they will not accept even the furs from the trappers hereabouts unless I give permission. If they fear your power I want them to know also that I have power."

"I've discovered that already," Stewart said, "and I expect that you won't hesitate to go to any limits."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

Instead of replying he looked at her steadily, then said:

"You probably don't realize just how near twilight is and you are not experienced enough in the woods to follow a trail in the darkness."

Without further ceremony he started across the clearing toward the path over which she had come, and the great dog followed at his heels.

A feeling of impotent anger and resentment was strong in the girl. This was the climax of insult, that he should dare to offer her aid. She waited, determined that there could be nothing even resembling aid or courtesy from him. Calmly he leaned against the bole of a tree and the dog sat quietly beside him, looking toward her.

Minutes passed, a half hour perhaps. She saw that the sun had disappeared behind the western ridges and heavy shadow was on the hills, darkness in the lower levels. This was childishness. She could not prevent him from going over that path if he chose, but she did not need his help. Abruptly she started toward the path and he waited until she was almost there, then he led off where the trail wound among the trees, and it was much darker there.

It seemed a long time she followed and she was conscious of the physical effort. Twice she stumbled over roots that extended across the path and once she

came up short, face-on in the brush. Strange, sudden fear came then and she listened eagerly for the sound of his footsteps, but the trail was soft with the fallen needles of spruce and fir. She was on the point of calling out, but bit her lip and hesitated. In the Stygian blackness of the forest at one side there was a sinister, rustling sound as of something moving. She fought back sudden terror, then overwhelming relief came. Slightly above her she heard the sound of his voice.

"You are off the trail. Wait a moment right where you are."

She heard him coming and saw his form as he approached to within a few feet. Something brushed against her, a large animal body and she cringed back and uttered a low inarticulate sound of fright, but Stewart spoke again.

"Come here, Sarge, to heel!"

His voice was commanding and a moment later its tone had changed.

"Now, Miss Mason, if you'll just come up this way. The path turns right here and there's a game trail that leads off where you are, toward the mountains. It would be a terrible thing to be lost in there."

Willingly, eagerly, she obeyed, and he went on at a slower pace, a few feet in front of her so that

often she could see the vague, dark form of the dog only a step ahead.

Her thoughts were in a turmoil. She was forced to acknowledge that without him there might have been a horrible ending to all her aims and hopes, and she found it disconcerting to admit even to herself that now she was deeply indebted to him. And as she looked back over her meeting with him and their conversation it flashed upon her that he had won completely. Also it had not been as she expected it would. She had steeled herself for roughness, the crudest thoughts, crudely expressed, possibly insults. Instead, he had met her with a way of speaking that was every bit equal to her own. She could recall now his diction and enunciation, and his attitude had been courtesy itself—cold, distant courtesy until the end. She thought of his cabin, the setting, the flowers and cultivated berry bushes, the honeysuckle and the books and other things. Why, none of the others had these! And the personality of the man! It was not a coarse, brutish thing. He was more dangerous than she had expected because obviously there was greater depth. How easily he had put her to a disadvantage! He was formidable and now Edith knew that this must be to a finish with no quarter asked or given. Rodgers, Carlson, Lemier, all were right. The cunning of the man was greater than she had been willing to

admit. These people who adhered to him and believed in him were deluded by his evident superiority over their thick ignorance. It could not be other than to a finish now and she was willing to face the odds of this ignorance, this dumb belief.

She was aware of the pale light, devotional it seemed,, that came down through the branches now as the moon rose, and ahead she saw that they were emerging from the forest. Here was the top of the slope above her cabin where MacIntosh had pointed out the way. She saw him coming across the clearing now and he carried a rifle. It dawned upon her that he must be coming to hunt for her. Where the path emerged Stewart had stepped aside for her to pass.

"Thank you," she said, simply.

He bowed and turned back into the path again with his dog, lost in a moment in that darkness. And she stood peering after him until MacIntosh was almost at her side.

Her thoughts were elsewhere as MacIntosh informed her that Lemier and another of the lumber company's men had arrived from down river with a canoe load of necessities, nor was she greatly interested in his information that it might be the last contact with the outside world in many weeks. Abstractedly she understood that the subtle thing which was com-

ing out of the north was the advance guard of winter, taking line after line of summer's entrenchments, paving the way for the crushing advance that would settle with overwhelming power in the near future. She knew there had been ice fringes, lacework of it at the river's edge the morning before and that until the sun attained a high place in the heavens there was a real chill. Also she was aware that once the river froze sufficiently to make canoe travel perilous she would be shut off by a hundred and fifty miles of forest until the snow came, and then there would be a dog sled to replace the canoe and bring her mail and supplies every two or three weeks.

Harold Rodgers, his father, and her own mother, had begged her not to attempt facing out the winter here. But she could see no reason to leave. There were other women and even small children here. Of course, it would not be so comfortable as down in the city, but this was her fight. They did not seem to understand that. What did their petty little charities and denials, their efforts at uplift work mean compared to this? She was fighting not only for these people, but for the unborn generations of them. She was fighting Stewart for them and now she realized that she had not even understood before how to fight him or the manner of man he was.

She paid little attention to Lemier and the huge, yellow-haired riverman who had come up with him, bringing her the things from the Rodgers mills.

CHAPTER XIV

THE glow from the logs in the fireplace lit the interior of the cabin where MacIntosh, Lemier and the yellow-haired riverman who had come up with him sat, puffing evil-smelling smoke from their wooden pipes to give added heaviness to the atmosphere.

Lemier took his pipe from between his teeth and blew a great mouthful of smoke toward the ceiling of split logs.

"MacIntosh he weel have one easy time this winter, eh Sven?" he said.

The yellow-haired man grunted.

"Ay, an' he get good panga[1] widout work," he said enviously.

MacIntosh laughed in a fashion that gave the impression of cheerful good nature.

"Ay, yer right, Sven. Rodgers pays me the seventy dollars a month same as if I was wurrkin' down to the mills, an', mon, that is good panga for loafin' like this wid little to do 'stead of breakin' yer back on the logs."

Lemier blew out another cloud of smoke.

"MacIntosh," he said deliberately, "you were the good fren'. Ay lak you."

[1] Money.

The Scot riverman looked at him.

Lemier went on as deliberately as before.

"How you lak to make five hunnerd dollar?"

"'Twould be good money," MacIntosh said, but the expression on his face belied the calmness of his voice.

Again Lemier spoke slowly.

"The young Rodgers have come back to the mill—but that you must not speak of. Maybe so I know where fifteen hunnerd dollar wait if thees Stewart are die sometime—five hunnerd for you, for me, for Sven, each have five hunnerd."

MacIntosh arose and emptied the ashes of his pipe into the fireplace.

"Lemier, would ye try to fit the spectacle glasses on a she-bear an' her wi' the cubs playin' aboot?" he asked.

The other looked at him without speaking and then blinked.

MacIntosh laughed in that good-natured way.

"Lemier, ye make me think ye are so dumb yer own mither would be ashamed to own ye. Is yer memory no longer than yer nose? Can ye no recall seein' Stewart when he was in the fightin' mood?"

"Paul Lemier does not forget," the other said sullenly.

"Well, 'twould take more than five hundred dollars to make me go lookin' for this mon Stewart wi' trouble

in me thoughts," MacIntosh said. Quickly he added, "Is it young Rodgers that would be payin' fifteen hundred dollars for such a job?"

"I have not said so," Lemier answered.

At last he arose.

"Stewart he have many what you call the enemy," he said, and went out.

The yellow-haired man followed him and MacIntosh went along. The sun was coming up over the hills toward the east and flooded the river with its radiance, but there was little warmth in it yet and the men drew their mackinaws close as they went down toward the bank where the big canoe was drawn up out of the water.

"Have ye the letters she gave ye to take out?" MacIntosh asked.

Lemier grunted affirmatively and dragged the canoe down to the river's edge, launching it and holding it as his companion clambered into the prow. Then he placed his rifle and blanket aboard and stepped into the stern.

"Ye'll make it easy afore the ice sets," MacIntosh called, "an' it may not be so many weeks before the snow'll be ripe for the team to bring ye up again. Luck to ye, Lemier, an' ye, too, Sven."

The others waved and their paddles dipped. MacIntosh watched them until they had passed around the

bend of the stream. Once he saw that Sven looked back. When they had gone from sight he strode swiftly along the river bank to where the forest began along its edges. Then he worked his way through the brush a few yards back from shore and came to the bend perhaps a mile below. Here the river's meandering turn had shut out sight of the others and suddenly MacIntosh halted and bent low. The canoe was nowhere to be seen on the river and his eyes searched the bank. There he saw Lemier and Sven and they were moving at a fast pace through the brush, but it was evident that even in their haste their movements were stealthy. Guardedly MacIntosh followed, keeping a discreet distance. They skirted the clearing in which were the cabins of himself and the girl, and came to the trail that led around the hillside, crossed the intervening dip and wound through the forest on the other slope to the cabin of Stewart.

At the dip MacIntosh stopped and hesitated. He started to follow on, then drew back into the protecting thickets even further and waited. Once he mused aloud.

"Lemier, ye are that dumb ye art actooly smart."

CHAPTER XV

IN his cabin Stewart was absorbed with some small bits of stone that he broke and dropped in test tubes, pouring in a few drops of liquid from various little bottles. The morning sun came in through the open doorway where the big, gray patched dog lay just outside on the porch.

There was a disturbing sound, that low rumbling in the great dog's chest, and Stewart looked up. He saw the big head lift, sharp ears forward, and noted, too, that the heavy mane was up, each hair seemingly on end. Once he spoke reassuringly but the rumbling grew and at last the dog tensed, crouching.

"What is it, Sarge?" Stewart said. "Must be some of the bears have come to feed on our berries, eh?"

But there was something about the dog's attitude that made him wonder and he saw that it looked toward a spot in the forest near to the path that he invariably used on his way to the river. Someone must be approaching, and a stranger, judging by the attitude of the dog, which invariably ceased its growling at a word from Stewart when any of those it knew approached.

Now Stewart waited and saw that the dog's eyes

held that one spot. But there was nothing to indicate what had aroused it and Stewart felt a sensation of some threat impending. If it had been an animal it would most likely have moved and the dog's eyes would have followed. Any one of those humans who inhabited the forest hereabouts would have come out into the clearing to call greetings and exchange a few words.

Suddenly the stillness was shattered by the clattering din of a rifle shot that echoed and rolled from the hills. The bullet smashed one of the panes of glass and broke a cross piece in the window, missing Stewart's head by a fraction, probably because the rifleman had misjudged through the glass.

As suddenly as the shot had come the great dog leaped away, silent now, and sped toward the forest. And Stewart dropped to the floor, a quick, terrible anger mounting. He arose and lunged through the doorway into another room of the cabin where there were three bunks of elaborate build. At the head of one was a revolver and he grabbed it in passing, then leaped through the open window in the rear of the cabin nearest the forest on the other side of the clearing. A few steps and he dived among the brush beyond the berry bushes and was gone into the forest as he heard another shot and a terrible snarling.

Now he cast caution to the winds and ran among the trees toward the sounds. Ahead he saw the mackinaw of a man and he stopped the headlong rush, then went forward slowly, using all the consummate skill of an expert woodsman. There was a fir clump a few feet away from his objective and he reached its protection. There he saw and recognized them, Lemier and a riverman from the Rodgers mills, a man he had known simply as Sven. Their gaze was on some bush in front and one of them raised his rifle as a gray shape moved and was gone. The great dog was drawing closer like a wild thing that hunted dangerous prey without giving it a chance to strike back. A smile was on Stewart's face as he saw that these two who had come in the rôle of killers were cornered now by the battle strategy of the dog. They were watching for it, unaware of Stewart's presence where he was hidden by the fir clump, and he put the revolver in his pocket, then closed with a great leap.

The one who was called Sven fell under a crushing blow on the neck. Lemier whirled and attempted to bring the rifle up but Stewart was upon him and tore it from his grasp. A moment they faced and the riverman drew his head low behind his shoulder, holding his left arm bent slightly and close to his face while his right was drawn back for one of those long swings that are the fighting methods of the woods.

He lunged, ready to grasp and fight it out in primeval fashion, biting, kicking, scratching, or to strike with that great fist clenched. But the antagonist that he sought was not there. Before that wild rush Stewart stepped aside and Lemier stumbled past blindly to turn and come back again while Stewart's glance appraised him coolly. It was as though he had merely waited and allowed the first attack to go unchallenged to gauge the other's fighting methods.

Lemier's onslaught was heavy, a slow-footed mace-man against a dexterous wielder of the rapier, but Stewart saw the deadliness of it and he also saw the gathering of the great dog's body as it tensed for a closing rush, lips drawn back, great fangs gleaming white. He shouted to the dog and it halted, snarling as though deprived of its prey, then crouched with head low and paws drawn close, ready.

But now Stewart did not step aside from the path of the other's rush. Instead he bent slightly to meet it and his back straightened from hips to shoulders as he drove in an uppercut that carried all the lifting powers of his thighs. It reached home, a terrible body blow, slightly too high to have its greatest effect. But the other grunted and crumpled forward. His left hand caught about the neck of Stewart and his breath came back in a straining gulp, while the dog gathered once again, and its eyes glistened fiercely.

Breast to breast they struggled and the riverman sought to gouge at the eyes. Then he threw back his head and screamed an oath, lifting one leg where the fangs of the dog had reached and torn in a quick rush.

Through his anger, through the madness of battle Stewart saw and knew what had happened. An instant he forgot the intensity of the strife and eased the pressure of his shoulder muscles. His head turned away from his adversary and his command to the dog was stern. It drew back, still snarling, and the next moment the world reeled about Stewart; there were lights and the heavens seemed falling. He staggered backward under the impact of the blow against his jaw, a blow that he had left the opening for by turning his attention to the dog. Through the turmoil that was in his brain came realization that this had been a foolish thing, this subconscious horror against permitting the great fanged animal to attack a human being even though the other sought his own life. But that thought was driven out by another impact of a heavy body against him, seeking to crush him down and the eyes of the riverman glared close to his own while thick fingers grasped at his throat.

There was terrific pressure and Stewart's mouth opened. But his head was clearing from the shock of that jaw punch. The other had made a mistake.

Another such blow in that moment of Stewart's helplessness and the fight would have been over, but Lemier had closed instead to throttle and his grip was like that of a heavy rope about the neck.

Stewart's eyes were wide, his face coloring heavily and there were veins on his temples that swelled. Then his arms came up inside those of the other. One hand closed on the other man's nostrils and his head went back. The agony of that pressure was frightful. It was not a matter of breathing, rather it was a question of which could stand the torturing pressure longest; and the choking grasp on Stewart's throat was released suddenly.

They fell apart, each taking a step backward involuntarily, one gasping for breath, the other seeking to brush aside the tear mist that had come to his eyes and blurred his sight.

It was as though two giant bulls of the forest reaches drew back to gather new strength only to resume the struggle more grimly. They faced and there was sullen rage on the countenance of the riverman. The brute dominated in him now. Again he drew his hand over his eyes in a fierce gesture as though to pull aside the curtain that had come with the awful pressure of Stewart's fingers. He had gained the throat-hold and the fact that Stewart found a way to break it only made his anger more bestial.

He lowered his head again and leaped forward with a bellow of anger, all else forgotten in his mad desire to batter down this man who had been on the verge of defeat only to come back and break that strangling hold by almost tearing his nose off.

Stewart's thoughts were clearing, the mad pounding of his temples had eased, and he smiled that queer smile of the mouth alone. There was something light about the way he moved slightly like one of the great cats to meet the other's rush. They came together with a shock and Stewart took grips with him in a test of sheer strength. It was as though they stood still a moment, swaying, tugging, their arms exerting terrific pressure on each other. Then Stewart broke the grip the other had obtained about his body and wrenched himself free. Once he struck, a jab, and landed that uppercut to the body again. The other man had no chance against the simplest kind of boxing and he came forward like a thing out of the primitive, the breath almost gone from his body under the force of that uppercut, but seeking to close where his brute power would have its chance.

Again Stewart smiled his queer smile and deliberately stepped close to meet him. For one brief moment they seemed to be merely leaning against each other. Lemier struggled to get his hands up to the throat or the eyes, tugged fiercely and found that

his arms were pinned tightly. His head thrust forward to bite but he was whirled off his feet, lifted into the air and crashed down.

He lay quietly a moment as though the terrific shock of it had stunned him, then started to rise and Stewart saw that the other one had also rolled over, the effects of that neck punch worn off, and was on his knees. Lemier drew the sheath knife at his belt and Stewart fell back. The one called Sven went toward where the rifles had fallen.

This was to a finish, if they could make it so. That was apparent. It had gone beyond a mere matter of a fight for physical supremacy. They were out to kill. A moment more and it would all be over.

There was a quick movement of Stewart's hand to his pocket and he drew the revolver. Lemier stopped in his advance and the other hesitated, then halted, looking vainly toward the rifles a few feet away as the revolver pointed toward him.

Stewart did not speak. The great dog had come to his side, held in leash only by his command. A moment they faced these two invaders and to Stewart came the realization that it had not been conclusive, that given the slightest chance they would attack again, more desperately than before. He went to the rifles, the revolver ready in his hand, and picked them up.

"Drop your knife, Lemier!" he ordered.

The long-bladed weapon fell to the ground and Stewart picked it up, then took one from the other riverman's belt.

There was something sharp, uncompromising about him now. He pointed toward the path and they obeyed while he followed. Neither made any effort to speak or turn and they came at last to the cleared space in which was the cabin of Edith Mason. It may have seemed a coincidence that MacIntosh appeared almost immediately from his own cabin and the sound of their approach drew the girl to her doorway.

Wide-eyed she looked on at this strange procession, Lemier and Sven, who had ostensibly started back down river, and walking in back of them, his face dark, Stewart, carrying two rifles and knives and with the big, grayish dog at his heels.

"Wait here," she heard Stewart order and the two men stopped, then he came toward her and dropped the rifles and knives at her feet.

"If you or Rodgers decide to send me any more visitors," he said, "you might at least show greater respect for me than to send such—such crude specimens of gunmen as these. And the next time tell them to shoot through the doors. I may have a difficult time replacing the glass they broke."

Without another word he turned and was gone toward the path. Once she called after him but if he heard, and she believed he must have, he gave no sign. Then she looked at the others and her mouth was tight.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was a few days after his encounter with Lemier and the other riverman that the first snow fell and Stewart began the long overland journey to the post at Alexis Creek. He would arrange credits there for himself and any of the others who were barred at Black House and were willing to make the long journey overland. There they would have no trouble. Other trading companies cared nothing for Rodgers. Stewart would turn over most of the money he possessed and agree that the few furs he took during the winters and those of Oowakano and some of the others would come there. In return credits would be extended to them and they could obtain any necessities. But it was a tremendous trip compared to the one to Black House. Seventy-five miles of mountain trails had to be traversed, crossing the backbone of the range to the waters of the Chillcotin and then a journey downstream of more than a hundred miles to the post. Compared to that the hundred and fifty mile trip to Black House, all of which could be made by canoe in summer or on the open ice of the river with a dog team in winter, was much easier.

Stewart knew full well what the effect would be. Some would be disgruntled, some would openly rebel,

forswear their friendship with him rather than face the ordeal of that trip to the Alexis Creek post. He knew human nature well enough to expect that. They were all aware he was going for he'd told them the purpose of his trip. She must know, too, and probably had sent word to Carlson or Rodgers in an effort to stop his trade there also. He expected anything; but there was little chance that they could have any effect at Alexis Creek where another company owned the post.

Stewart knew the Factor there of old. His name was Holdskum, a giant of a man with a big head, a shock of light hair, and broad, heavy body.

Now Stewart's thoughts ran on as he breasted the rising levels of the mountains that had to be crossed to the Chillcotin. It was cold, the first real snap of the winter. A white covering a few inches deep was on the open places and the wind in the mountains was a power to be reckoned with. Ahead was the gap, a natural pass between the heights, and Stewart went toward it, climbing constantly. That pass was the divide. Beyond it the effort of mounting the rising levels would cease and the way would slope down gradually to the Chillcotin. But it was a tiresome trip and meant the necessity of packing whatever supplies were brought this way. That would be a slow, hard task. The natural way of the north is the canoe

with the streams as avenues of travel. By this method they could use canoes in the spring and summer on the Chillcotin but there remained that long trip through the mountains where everything would have to be carried, and when winter had really settled in its full powers taking a dog sled through the mountains would be genuine hardship. But it would have to be done, at least by Stewart and those who believed in him.

As he came through the pass which was a flat dip between two rearing crests of the mountains the wind buffeted and tore at him but he fought on with lowered head and came out on the other side where the mountain levels lowered.

At night he camped in the forest on the slopes below. Two days of travel and he was on the banks of the Chillcotin. Its surface was frozen and he walked out on it in that long, swinging stride. Now there would be a journey downstream on the ice of more than a hundred miles but this would be easy traveling. He opened the mackinaw for there was little wind. In the middle of the river the ice was thickest and it was there he walked.

The miles went by easily and there was no tiring now. Twice he saw the smoke rising above the forest that told of the cabins of trappers but he did not stop until long after dark. There was an open space on

the bank and above it a cabin where an Indian trapper lived with his squaw and child. It was the picture of wilderness desolation, the dark outline of the cabin, the solid background of the forest and the snow, silvered gray in the faint light from the heavens. Stewart knew that cabin, recalled it from once before when he'd come down this way by canoe in summer. He did not stop now, for he had no desire for the companionship of human beings. Instead he went on, miles beyond, to camp alone and sit long into the night by his fire.

In the morning he was up before daylight and on, traveling steadily and that night he did not camp until late and was off again early, continuing hour after hour. Night fell. Here were three cabins grouped closely at the river's edge. He was nearing Alexis Creek. A long bend of the stream and beyond he saw the post, a huge cleared space above the river bank, a dozen cabins, the big storehouse, for Alexis Creek was a more important post than Black House. The moon was up and lighted the scene vaguely. A dog howled, that dismal protest of the husky breed. Another took it up and there was an outburst as of fierce mourning that made the flesh creep. Then the sound faded off into silence. Stewart saw the post building and there was a light in the window. He went toward it and entered. A half dozen men

were in the trading room. Holdskum, the Factor, leaned heavily on the counter and smoked a long, wooden pipe. An Indian sat on his blanket on the earth floor beside the fireplace. The other four played cards at a crude table. They were men of the forest, clad in the high, native larigans, their mackinaws cast aside on the floor in the warmth. Two of them were plainly half-bloods and the others of swarthy, dark appearance, sons of the old voyageurs, their dark eyes sharp and eager.

Two candles gave a dull light like the slow flame of damp wood burning. Shadows were heavy in the corners and played about the shelves on which were indistinct piles of trade goods. One of the card players banged heavily on the card table with hard knuckles and said something in French, laughing a quick, triumphant laugh. The other three turned back to the game after looking up at Stewart; there were hasty exclamations, more laughter among themselves, then their glances lifted to Stewart again and they nodded.

Holdskum spoke.

"Hello, John Stewart. I've been looking for you."

Stewart smiled and advanced to the counter to shake hands. Now came the realization that he was tired. After all he'd made more than a hundred miles

in three days over the open ice and very nearly two hundred including that trip across the mountains in five days all told since he'd started.

There was something questioning in his smile, but Stewart was not surprised at the Factor's greeting. He'd half expected that some word of his coming would be given, some effort made to do the same thing here that had been done at Black House.

"They cut off your trade at Black House a while back, didn't they?" Holdskum asked, and his voice was not unfriendly.

Stewart nodded.

"What's the trouble?" the Factor asked. "Same old fight with that fellow Rodgers who owns the lumber mills on the river over there?"

"Yes," Stewart said. "He still wants our lands."

The Indian got up and went out silently. Holdskum looked toward him, then back at Stewart.

"That isn't the reason they gave our company," he said. "I got a message from headquarters some time ago to be careful about your trade."

He laughed.

"They suggested that unless I was pretty sure of you, I'd better not let you nor any of the others open credits here," he said. "Seems Rodgers and his outfit that owns Black House gave warning that they were cutting off your trade because you folks didn't

bring in enough furs to square up for what you got—they said you owed a lot and wouldn't pay up."

The smile was gone from Stewart's face and his lips were tight. His eyes met those of the Factor steadily.

"You know me, Holdskum."

The Factor nodded.

"Yes, and I knew your old man. I sort of figured the reason, but you know what companies are. They can't understand the way we can here on the job and I might as well be frank with you. For a season or two I can't let you have much more'n you can square up for. They'd be on my neck and have me out of here in a jiffy if I couldn't balance up your credits when the boat comes in next spring."

"I have some money to start my credit with," Stewart said, "and we'll bring the furs down for more than we get. I'll give my word for that."

"All right, Stewart," Holdskum said. "I don't want you to feel hard toward me and I'd like to swing your trade away from Black House. I just wanted you to understand why I'm doing it if the time comes when I've got to draw the line. And, say," Holdskum laughed heavily, "there was a couple of that crowd from the Rodgers mills over here day before yesterday trying to find out what I'd do. That's what made me figure you was coming."

Again Holdskum laughed and one of the card players looked about, then said something to the others and all looked toward the Factor.

"Tell us joke," one said in English that was more of a patois. They returned to the cards and Holdskum went on.

"One of them kind of hinted at there being something in it for me if I didn't let you get nothing at all. I told him to get th' hell out—we don't run things that way here at Alexis Creek."

"What were they like?" Stewart asked, and the Factor described them. Stewart felt sure one was Lemier and the other might have been Carlson.

"I can't figure that fellow Rodgers," Holdskum said at last. "What's he after, anyhow?"

Stewart did not answer and Holdskum studied him.

"He wants to own that whole dog-gone river, don't he?" Holdskum said. "He must have more timber now than his mills can use in a hundred years. Maybe he's going to start some more mills."

One of the card players arose and stretched. There was a jargon of conversation among them and they went out toward the silent cabins.

Stewart spent the night at the post and in the morning arranged the details of his trading and what credits could be allowed, giving his money to Holdskum. Several times he noted that the Indian who

had been in the trade room the night before hung about the post, but it was a passing thought. It was mid-afternoon when he departed. He carried a small pack containing revolver ammunition and scented baits for the traps which he and Oowakano used, some cartridges, two new traps and a roll of heavy flannel cloth for Lebeau.

A mile or so on the open ice of the river and the marks of man were entirely obliterated; then a dog team rounded the bend, coming toward the post, five animals in the traces and a white man riding the empty sled. Stewart did not know him but called an answer to his greeting as they passed. Once he heard the command of the driver to his team, then they were gone and Stewart faced the long trip back alone through the wilderness.

Here were the three cabins, and a woman, clad in native garb and with long braids of dark hair over her shoulders, stood in front of one. She looked out toward him and stood staring until he was lost to sight up the river. Now the ice and the forested shores stretched on unbroken, lonely.

Dusk settled. He was miles above the post but he would go on far into the night before camping.

Suddenly the stillness was shattered by the report of a rifle and Stewart heard the vicious swish of the bullet. The clattering roar of the shot seemed to

come from all sides as it was taken up immediately and reëchoed by the forested slopes. It was impossible to tell from where it came but he was galvanized into action, charging at full speed toward the shore. The light was bad; the rifleman had waited too long. Again came the roar but this time the bullet did not even come close and Stewart plunged into the brush at the river's edge and was gone from sight in the forest. Once he stopped and unslung the rifle from across his back, then he went on in a great half circle, doubling back carefully on the hillside above. The dusk gave way to night and he hunted still; then gave it up at last and went on up the river. Now he did not camp. Mile after mile went by and still he had the feeling of pursuit, that vague, restless sense of danger that tries to warn. He did not return to the ice but followed the game trails close to the bank and looked back often. There was anger but the futility of turning back in an effort to hunt down his persecutors was evident. That would give them every advantage and he could prove nothing even though he found and overcame them. Who were they? He could only surmise and he went on through the night. When morning came he camped in a little pocket high in the hills and slept without a fire. Late that afternoon he went on again and returned to the ice of the river when dusk fell. Frequently he turned

abruptly to look back and his eyes constantly searched the sombre shore lines. He remained close to the bank where a few steps would afford him the protection of the brush. He came at last to the isolated cabin of the Indian trapper he knew. There he spent the night and in the morning went on. At the base of the mountains where he turned aside from the open ice of the river for the trip back across the heights a sled came out of the forest. There were four wolfish looking dogs in the traces and the Indian driver brought them to a halt at sight of Stewart. He was a trapper making the first round of the lines. On the sled was the velvety carcass of a lynx, two martens and an otter, its long, sinuous body clothed in magnificent dark fur.

They talked of conditions, and the Indian shook his head slowly, speaking the broken jargon that was partly English, partly French and with many words of his own people mingled in.

"Evil will follow my lines this winter," he said, and Stewart questioned him.

Hesitantly the red man pointed to a small break in the brush up the bank.

"Higher up there is one of my traps which I will lose for there is a wolf taken in it and the evil will follow."

"Show me the trap," Stewart said, and the red

man was hesitant, then led back into the forest, leaving the dog team content to rest. In the dense coverts along a small game runway was the trap that had been set for otter, and a great, blackish gray animal tugged and snarled at the thing which held its foreleg. The white foam flecked its muzzle and its big fangs clashed on the steel jaws. Stewart saw that it had gone mad with the torture and rage. It snapped and fought anew as the men neared, biting at the leg that was caught. Then it lunged toward them, horrible, vicious, and Stewart knew that the trapper would have left it there to die or gnaw its own leg off seeking freedom, rather than risk the curse that the superstition of his people decreed must follow for the man who kills a wolf. His fear would go even beyond that and he never would return there to remove the carcass and regain the trap.

Stewart shot the murderous brute without hesitation, ending its agonies, then lifted its body from the trap and pointed out to the Indian that its death meant life for many other animals. The red man took his trap, hurriedly to remove it from that spot and Stewart went on, up the rising levels toward the pass. His thoughts returned to that attack which had followed his departure from the post. Almost certainly he would never find out who had fired those shots but he was sure of who had instigated them

and it went back, perhaps through Lemier or some of the others, probably through Carlson, directly to the door of Rodgers.

Far in front he could see the pass between the mountain heights. Beyond was home. He noted that the sky seemed lowering and studied it carefully. The wind that came over the high places was a heavy wind, cold, but with that tinge of dampness that tells of the impending storm. It might come in the morning, but then he would be across the pass and nearing home.

CHAPTER XVII

EDITH MASON'S interest was not in the half dozen children of varying ages who sat around on the floor in the warmth of the comfortable fireplace in her cabin, listening raptly to her. Mechanically she read and spelled out the words which they repeated after her with many corrections in their pronunciation and explanations of meanings. One of them, a youngster from the cabin of Lebeau, the trapper, had fallen asleep and she did not notice it. This was the crude beginning of the school she visualized. But now her thoughts were elsewhere.

At the cabin of Lebeau the day previous MacIntosh had learned something that interested her and Lebeau came over and talked willingly when she sent for him.

Stewart had gone away, down to the post at Alexis Creek to establish credits for the trade of himself and some of the others. She had heard weeks before that he was going and Lemier had carried word to that effect down to Carlson. But from Lebeau she gained other facts. When Stewart came back from Alexis Creek he was going away again, going to that mystic region which these people called outside, down to the States. They did not quite understand what for, but it was help of some kind, to get some men

who had vast riches who would come here or send their men here and take great wealth out of these hill lands, some of which they would keep for themselves and give the rest to Lalonge, Lebeau, Stewart, all the rest who owned the land.

Edith smiled. At last the motives of this man were coming to light. It was amusing and she had written of it in the letter to Harold Rodgers which she sent off that morning when Lebeau started to the post at Black House with another letter from her to the effect that Lebeau had decided to cast his lot with her against Stewart. That was the first real victory in the weaning away of these people. Lebeau could not give up his land to any other without the consent of Stewart but he could transfer his allegiance and he did, although for some reason that she could not understand, he still feared Stewart, and at last she decided it must be a purely physical reason.

Readily enough Lebeau talked. He wanted to reopen trade at Black House. Stewart had said they would all trade at Alexis Creek hereafter but that was much further and the country to be traveled a great deal more difficult. Lebeau needed cartridges, he required new traps and flour and sugar as well as cloth for garments for his family, and he did not know those at the Alexis Creek post. If the power of her command would reopen the trade to him at

Black House he would go immediately with his dogs and then he could drive his team back with a sled to carry the things.

In the letter which she had sent with Lebeau to Harold Rodgers in care of the company's mills to be forwarded, she had exulted that their fight was almost won now. Stewart was going out to seek financial aid for some sort of development in a region where there was really nothing to develop. And when he failed his power among these people would be swept aside. Lebeau believed Stewart would be leaving a few days after he returned from Alexis Creek, and when he came back it would be to find that during his absence she had overthrown him.

He deserved it. The climax of his domination had been when he beat up Lemier and that other river-man because he chanced to encounter them in the woods near his cabin. But he only beat them because he had a revolver and took their rifles away. She could not exactly find it in her heart to blame Lemier for attempting to shoot in self-defense, nor for the intense hatred he exhibited when he told her of what had happened. She had written of that also to Harold Rodgers and told him she was glad he was safe down in the city. In lighter vein she described to him and her mother the subtle changes that had been going on for many days now. One could sense it. The

noises of the woods were stilled; strange, mystic silences were on the forest and powerful winds came down out of the north bringing snow flurries. Thus her thoughts were rambling from her reading and were interrupted when one of the children raised a gleeful voice.

"It's snowing, Miss Mason."

She looked up and saw a dozen drifting flakes that passed the one small window of the cabin. The sky was gray and seemed to be darkening. As she looked new flakes came and there were more of them, then the wind rustled against the window and the flakes came more and more heavily.

She went on with her reading but looked up frequently and saw that the fall had increased, that now it was as a white curtain constantly descending and at last she could not see the forest. And the wind increased, blowing the falling white against the window until it held fast there and shut out the view halfway across the four small panes of glass. The cabin seemed to grow colder and she told one of the boys to throw some additional logs on the fire. Little by little she was aware that the power of the wind was increasing and it smashed against the cabin in great gusting blows. She arose and went to look out through the window while the youngsters grouped about, staring out also. There were no signs of a

let-up and she went to the door and opened it. Something like a battering-ram smashed against it and sent her reeling. A cloud of snow whirled in and in a moment the cabin was cold as winter took possession. She bent her head forward and went to the doorway. Twice she called with all her lung power before MacIntosh looked up from where he was piling the fuel logs near his cabin. Then he came.

It did look like a terrible storm, he admitted, and perhaps it would be better to send the children to their homes before it became worse. She herself would take the child of Lebeau for she told herself that it was a part of her duty to see that all was right with his family during his absence. MacIntosh could take the others just to make sure that nothing happened. Of course, it would be all right to let them go alone for they were almost as much at home here in these woods as the young animals, but there were a couple of small ones and in a storm like this no one could tell.

She did not mind the task; it was not over three-quarters of a mile through the woods and there was a trail leading to Lebeau's cabin that she'd been over a score of times. She'd rather relish this first real storm of winter.

And she did relish it, but she was conscious of a tiredness when they reached the cabin of Lebeau, for

it had been like fighting some actual physical opposition every step of the way. That wind was terrific. Sometimes she had to stop for a moment to gather new strength to oppose it. There was rich color in her cheeks when they arrived and her limbs had slight twinges, for the snow was piling in places. A few moments she rested in the cabin and accepted the tea proffered by the trapper's wife who wanted to send the same child she had brought home back with her so that she would get safely to her own cabin. Edith laughed away her fears and departed, the collar of her heavy mackinaw buttoned high. Head down she faced the wind and it turned her around. She walked with eyes closed except at intervals of a few steps when she had to open them momentarily to see. And there was little that she could see for the flakes were driven into her face with such momentum that they stung. She protected her eyes with her gloved hands but fifteen feet in front everything was vague. She found an opening into the forest that was the trail and walked on, stopping at intervals of a dozen steps or so to turn her back to the blasts which tore at the trees and brush, so that she might breathe. Once she laughed, but it was a quick little laugh, and she plunged ahead. In a vague way she realized this path seemed to have more turns than the one she had come over. She tried to look about to reassure

herself, but could not see through this descending white.

There was an uneven footing beneath the snow but she went on. It seemed that something grasped her booted foot and tugged as her toe was caught amid some of the creeping things that grow in the woods. Her arms shot forward and she fell. Her head struck against the bole of a fallen tree and she lay still a moment. Then a moan came from her and she rolled over. The world seemed tumbling in on her, great falling lumps of it were pounding at her temples and she tried blindly to arise. Weakly she attained her knees at last and then reached her feet. Through her half-conscious thoughts came an impelling desire to go back to the cabin of Lebeau and she turned. Sharp bits of brush seemed to reach out and tear at her and she staggered and went stumbling on into the forest and the storm, while the graying clouds settled lower. Repeatedly she tripped and fell, but was always up, holding her hands in front of her face to ward off the sharp things. Once a suppressed sob escaped her and there was a fleck of blood on her forehead where the warm turban of caribou skin was pushed back. Again she fell and the rocks seemed to come up through the snow to strike at her, but she went on and now there was no semblance of a path as she forced her way through the brush.

CHAPTER XVIII

ABOUT the thoughts of Stewart there was an oppressive heaviness, sadness and resentment. He'd beaten the storm in, arriving at his cabin before the first white flakes drifted down. And Oowakano was there, had come to see whether Stewart was back yet and to provide for the needs of the great dog that was left to wait at home. The Indian told him that which seemed to bring a crisis.

Lebeau was going to Black House, had probably departed already, in fact. He had deserted Stewart and trade would be reopened to him at Black House because this woman from the land of cities said so. Oowakano had met him that morning and talked with him.

It was the first open break by any of these for whom it seemed Stewart had spent the energies of so much of his life. They were deserting that leadership which he had worked so hard, given so much to build up. In the pack which he had just brought in from the Alexis Creek post were traps, ammunition, cloth for Lebeau. There was something bitterly hard about it. He was tired and he'd made that trip mainly for them, to open trade so that they could obtain the things they needed while he went out,

down to the States to put through the plan he had in mind. That plan probably would bring an end to the persecution of Rodgers, but now Stewart felt a melancholy pervading. He stood on the porch of his cabin, leaning against one of the supports, hands in back of him, and the great dog came and sat close. Oowakano departed, for his trap lines must be attended.

Stewart looked toward the forest and it too seemed melancholy. For days, weeks, he'd been aware of those changes which presage the closing in of winter with all its powers. He'd seen the leaves curl and fall. In the bottoms there had been the challenging roars of the bull moose, the soft, luring cadence of the cows. And on the heights the brattling challenges of the caribou bulls sounded frequently. Also he'd found areas where earth and rocks were torn up and saplings snapped off under the embattled thrashing of the antlered giants. The ground had been covered by the first flurries and the rivers were frozen solidly.

There were other signs, too, signs that did not augur well for the wilderness folk nor the human inhabitants either. For one whose eyes could read there were indications on every hand of the terror that was coming to the woods. The meat eaters were already fighting among themselves as the scarcity of rabbits became more acute. It would be a bad sea-

son for furs. The woods were silent and Stewart knew that was because most of the birds had left. He'd seen wedge after wedge of geese and ducks, of teal and even the slow winging flight of three whistler swans, great, dark birds, flying down the valleys.

Many of these signs he'd noted during the trip down to Alexis Creek and back. Inside the cabin were the things he'd brought for Lebeau, who was the first to desert. Stewart looked up at the sky now and there was no doubt of what was coming. The north was about to launch a furious onslaught. There were other indications. Not a thing stirred in the forest, not even a chickadee uttered its cheerful notes. Well enough they knew what was coming and were huddled close in expectation.

The first flakes of the storm drifted down but Stewart did not notice. His thoughts had turned elsewhere. Why wait here any longer? Why not go out as soon as this impending storm was over, down to the States to secure the aid he needed?

His thoughts were interrupted by the moist softness of the great dog's tongue as it licked his hand. Stewart looked down at it and smiled. Then he noticed the white flakes falling and they came faster on the wind.

"Sarge, I'm going to leave you with Oowakano this

winter and he'll use you as a leader in that team of his. You're better than any of them, and if I know anything about you each one of them is in for a quick licking until they all admit you're boss."

The dog stared up at him out of half closed brown eyes that did not blink. A fierce gust of wind drove the snowflakes in against them and already the first blanket of white was forming. Stewart reached inside for the things he'd brought for Lebeau, then closed the door of the cabin and started across the clearing. Once more he spoke to the dog.

"Come on, we'll take these over. Maybe we haven't been keeping in close enough touch with Lebeau lately. Up here it seems the tightest hold you can have on people is to make them fear you. I wouldn't be surprised if you were afraid of me. Perhaps that's why you're as good a dog as you are."

He leaned over in his long striding walk and tickled the great dog in back of the ears and its mane was wet where the snowflakes were settling.

A buffeting wind smashed against them and the dog's head lowered. It turned behind the man for the protection he gave. Another smash of wind battered against Stewart and it was as though a wall moving rapidly forward had struck him. It stopped him and drove him backward a short step. Then his head lowered and he bent forward, forcing ahead as

though dragging a heavy load. The snow struck, each flake a vicious thing and now it was no longer melting. There was added cold in the wind, that touch of metallic hardness which in the belief of the Indian tribesmen is the breath of the ice spirits in the forbidden lands of the boreal regions.

It tore at the close buttoned mackinaw of Stewart and drove the white drift along the ground like dense mists that shut off the view on all sides. A hundred feet from the forest, while he was still in the clearing, Stewart could not see the trees other than as a mystic, dark place. The blood quickened in his body and there was something in the nature of a physical combat against these elements. It lifted him from the mental depression. He was in the woods on that trail which sure instinct took him to. Here the wind was piling drifts, whirling the snow from every open glade to bank it against the slightest obstructions, and the light was fading. That dull gray of low clouds was adding its twilight to the short day.

The trail circled about the hillside and suddenly the great dog gave off a rumbling, throaty sound. Immediately Stewart stopped and looked about, but even here it was impossible to see for any great distance. He looked down at the dog and saw that its eyes were fixed steadily on a spot to one side of and below the trail where the brush was thick. That

rumbling growl came again and again and the dog took a stealthy step forward, crouching slightly.

Through Stewart's mind came thoughts of the day not so long ago when Lemier and Sven had come and here he was now out here as always except when hunting or on the trail, without a gun or weapon of any kind. Unless there was some definite need for it a gun was simply an encumbrance and he understood the woods well enough to know that man rarely had need of one for his own protection. But now he wished for one and knew that wishing was useless.

His eyes held that brush thicket, watching for the slightest sign of movement. There could be no questioning Sarge, for the great dog never gave needless alarm. Something was there, perhaps an animal, but the dog had never growled at the presence of an animal before. Either he advanced swiftly, silently, to the fight, or if the other were a bear, he remained aloof.

It must be a human and whoever it was had the advantage of position most certainly. What use to remain here waiting? Stewart plunged impulsively down from the trail through the forest and the dog was a few steps in advance. It stopped at the edge of a clump of matted brush and Stewart forced his way among it. Here the light was dim and he

drew the branchings down all about. There he saw something dark and he took a few quick steps toward it. It was a person, one shoulder and the fur capped head barely visible above the snow that had drifted about. Stewart bent down and grasped the shoulder. He forced the form over and saw the face and it was the face of Edith Mason, the woman from the city, the woman who had sought to tear down all that he had built up and fought for. Her eyes were closed and her lips slightly parted. There was a nasty lump on her forehead, a bruise where the blood was congealed and frozen and about the corners of her mouth was a bluish tint. Her face was pale, almost waxen of appearance.

Stewart reached under her shoulders and lifted her out of the drift. Her body seemed stiff and no sound came from her but he saw that she breathed. Carefully he laid her in the snow, kneeling between her and the wind, and drew off the gloves. Her fingers were stiff and he rubbed them violently and bent them, massaged her wrists and face. He saw that she was alive and now her breathing came in faint gaspings. Then he took off his big mackinaw and spread it on the snow. Carefully he laid her on it, buttoned it about her and lifted her, holding her close so that the warmth of his own body would reach her. In one arm he held her lightly and drew the collar of

the mackinaw up so that it came about her cheeks and her face was at his neck.

With his one free hand he grasped the brush and saplings and strode up toward the path again. A moment he hesitated there and the wind smashed and tore at him, then he turned back as he had come, back toward his own cabin, and the gray dog followed at his heels.

In his arms she seemed such a helpless thing, merely a woman who had faced a terrible ordeal, and he was conscious of a stirring sympathy for her. A half hour longer, perhaps less than that, and the storm would have crushed out the last spark of her life. Stewart's stride increased. Even now it might be too late. His cabin became a goal in a race for the life of this slip of a girl-woman who had opposed him at every turn, sought to undermine his influence and defeat him. He forged ahead grimly and his breathing came faster at the effort. At last he was in the clearing and ahead was the cabin. He would need help, the help of a woman. There, on the porch, was a figure—Oowakano—come back probably because the traps could not be attended in this storm. He would send the Indian for the wife of Lebeau while he himself began the fight to bring back the life that was trembling in the balance, for well enough he knew that the freezing danger was not the only one to this body so chilled and wet.

CHAPTER XIX

EDITH MASON awoke and there was a warmth that was uncomfortable. Her whole body ached and that warmth extended to her eyelids, her breath seemed to burn slightly and it hurt to breathe. She was in a strange bunk that seemed exceedingly soft. There was a big fireplace with blazing logs but the window at the end of the room was slightly open so that the air was fresh and she knew that as she breathed it in it was cool. Her garments were gone and she felt sudden resentment. Then someone moved in the room near the head of her bunk and she saw that it was a woman—the wife of Lebeau, the trapper. But this was not the cabin of Lebeau. That was a much more crude affair than this.

She moved a little and tried to speak but her voice came in an unrecognizable whisper and the other woman came to her side and leaned over, shaking her head and holding her finger to her lips.

Edith tried to remember what had happened and slowly came bits of hazy recollection. Again she moved impulsively and tried to speak but the other woman interrupted.

"Non—M'sieu Stewart say you must not. He find you in the snow where you die an' he breeng

you here. Then he send the Indian, Oowakano, that I might come to help, for there are some thing he cannot do. He have you rolled in the blanket before the fire when I come an' he pour the w'iskey in your mouth. But I breeng you in here and take off the wet clothe as he tell me so that you are warm an' dry."

The woman smiled comfortingly, reassuringly.

"M'sieu Stewart, he know what to do so that you are soon be well, but he say you must be ver' quiet an' have the good, clean air in warm room. He go now to breeng the leetle one, my Jean, so that I may stay here an' care for you some day until you are well, for my 'osban' he go to Black House."

Edith Mason closed her eyes weakly. She tried to understand and did, but it was an effort and she was tired. Once she attempted to throw off some of the covers and a sound like a sob escaped her. She was burning up and strange fancies possessed her. Through them she heard a door opening and the gusting wind, then a sound as though some heavy person had entered, and she opened her eyes.

She saw Stewart as he came to the doorway of the room and the face of Lebeau's child peered past him. The woman went toward it and Stewart came in and stood beside her bunk. She tried to speak. Though her lips framed words there was no sound and Stewart came close. A kindly smile was on his serious face

and his hand touched her cheek. She saw that he moved away and sudden gratefulness came as he brought a cup in which was water. He understood and just then he seemed the most gentle creature in the world. He went to one knee beside her, drew the blankets up about her neck and one of his big arms was under her head.

Slightly he tilted it up and held the cup to her lips while she drank slowly. It was cold, delicious, the most marvelous thing she had ever known. Then he went to the fireplace, threw an extra log on and lowered the window a little for the eddying snowflakes were coming in.

She heard the woman come back into the room and speak to Stewart, but she could not understand what it was she said. Then came Stewart's deep voice.

"Don't worry about Jean. He's too good a woodsman to be bothered by this. He'll make camp along the river somewheres and stay there until this storm blows itself out. No danger of him being foolish enough to keep going in this. It may hold him up two or three days but that won't matter."

To the girl in the bunk it seemed that there was a tinge of bitterness in the tones at the last, then all became confused, hazy again. She was sinking into fierce fires and there were long periods of sleep with returning reason at times and a weakness that was

terrible. She breathed with effort and her chest burned awfully. Once she came to amid tears. She had thought that she was home in her own bed, and her mother held her hand and spoke soothing words. And then her eyes opened and she looked up. It was Stewart who stood beside the bunk and he held her hand and brushed back her hair. The touch of his fingers on her forehead was soothing and then he wiped the tears from her cheeks and spoke softly.

"You must lie quietly, little girl, and don't worry. Fretting won't do you a bit of good and a doctor, if it was possible to get one, couldn't do much more for you than we're doing. The tea that Oowakano is bringing the herbs for will break your fever as quickly as any physician would and Madame Lebeau and I are right here with you all the time. But you really must drink the broth that she makes for you."

She could not move. This weakness was terrible and she drifted off into space between the worlds of the infinite, floating, floating—sleep came at last and the man beside her put down her hand gently and drew the covers up while he continued to stroke her hair softly until he saw that she slept.

CHAPTER XX

STEWART went out of the room quietly and closed the door. In the great living room of the cabin the Lebeau child lay sleeping on the bear skin drawn up in front of the fireplace with one small hand resting across the furry back of the gray patched dog. Stewart spoke to the wife of Lebeau in a low voice.

"I am afraid she is very sick," he said. "Pneumonia under these conditions would be terribly bad. You might look in occasionally to see if she's still asleep. If there's any change or if she wakes up call me. I'm going to lie down. Two days without sleep watching beside a sick-bed and no action to keep you awake is a long time."

He yawned and went into the third room of the cabin, a small offshoot that was more of a storehouse than anything else. The dog opened its eyes and arose, stretched and went to the door which Stewart had closed behind him. There it pawed once, then sniffed and lay down.

How long he had been asleep Stewart did not know but it was midday when a sound that seemed to come from another world and floated down deep to him stirred his consciousness. It was repeated and then the voice of Madame Lebeau awakened him.

He heard a moaning and it rose to a pitiful scream. He was up in an instant and listened. Then he understood. The girl was delirious, and he went in to where she tossed and fought to throw aside the covers. Her face was dry and hot with fever, and she panted for breath with wheezing sounds.

Madame Lebeau looked at him and he saw that she understood. It was the thing he dreaded—pneumonia. They both had seen it before. A few moments Stewart stood in silence and his thoughts ran on quickly. There was nothing more that he could do. Hot drinks, fresh air, and she must be watched constantly, tied down perhaps to prevent the covers being thrown off. And when the crisis came—he would only be able to stand helplessly looking on while she fought for life. He started. There was the Reverend Macungie, the medical missionary whose base was Black House. Stewart recalled their last meeting when the missionary had said he'd come gladly if there was ever a time Stewart needed him. Stewart did need him now—for another, to aid in the fight for the life of this girl who had bent her every effort toward defeating him.

Whatever was to be done must be done quickly if they were to have every available resource ready when the crisis came. And Madame Lebeau could not be left alone here during that time. If only Violet

Lalonge were here—but he'd sent her outside to prepare her so that she could be the help this girl from the city pretended she was trying to be. He'd ask the wife of Lalonge to come over during the days so that Madame Lebeau could gain the sleep that would enable her to be on hand during the nights. Once he thought of that trip down to Black House and back, three hundred miles on the ice of the river. He might take Oowakano's dog team but the dogs were not yet in that superb condition that would come a little later after the summer's softness had been worked off, and if a storm should come they would be a hindrance rather than an aid. He could go on indefinitely it seemed, but dogs had their limit.

Briefly, he told Madame Lebeau of his plan, gave her instructions, then took his rifle and a small pack of food and went out, and the wheezing gasps of the girl in the bunk seemed to follow him as a pathetic pleading.

CHAPTER XXI

HAROLD RODGERS walked back and forth in front of the window in Carlson's headquarters at the mills. He looked out on the white world and winced mentally as realization came that it would be a cold trip down to the railroad by which he meant to return to the city. But, in his own mind it was imperative to get out of here. In the first place Edith Mason did not know of his presence here. He looked at the open letter on the table. It was addressed to him at his home and she had trustingly sent it here to be forwarded, knowing that Carlson would dispatch a runner down to the railroad to mail it immediately.

The contents of that letter made it all the more necessary for him to get out. There must be no linking of his name with what was to come. But Carlson was a shrewd man and there would be no linking of anyone's name.

He walked to the table and picked up the letter again. Once he toyed with the sharp end of his mustache. Stewart was coming down to go out in quest of financial aid. In her letter Edith spoke of it as laughable but there was something dark on the face of Rodgers as he read.

He was impatient with his father as his thoughts

went back now. He had remonstrated at the idea of Edith coming up here, partly for the reason that soon or late he believed she must obtain some inkling of certain things she had not known about. But his father had only laughed. These crude mountain folk of the wilderness did not have any real knowledge of it themselves—and he doubted whether Stewart really understood.

Now Harold Rodgers knew that his father had underestimated this brute of a man, and he felt a dull hatred of Stewart for thoughts of the humiliation that had been his that day when the canoes were upset and he had had to appear before Edith Mason drenched and worsted.

Carlson had gone up to Black House immediately to see Lebeau when one of the post Indians brought the letter down to the mills. The information that the superintendent brought back was not very definite. Lebeau was not sure, and Carlson had not wanted to press him too hard, for certain suspicions could not be aroused. It all had to be done very casually and the impression created that there was no real vital interest.

But this much was fairly certain. Within a few days at most Stewart would be leaving, coming down to go outside. He would follow along the river through that vast white silence, for the rivers are the

avenues of the wilderness and what little travel there is seeks them as the shortest route, although in mileage they may be far longer than the direct way through the forest where continued travel is almost impossible.

There are many things that can happen to a man who travels through the wilderness in winter. Exhaustion can come or the quick pneumonia that strikes when the air is intensely cold and is breathed carelessly and fast without a face covering during physical exertion. Then, too, if it storms it is easy to become lost. And many times the most skilled of woodsmen, even the Indian trappers, have disappeared. On some occasions the scene of tragedy has been found with the mute testimony of snow packed where the feet of many wolves have closed their circle and fought among themselves after the conquest. Dog teams have even been known to turn. Thus the thoughts of Rodgers worked now.

Truly the north is a place of mystery where many things can happen and a man never be heard from again, especially if there be a possibility that he has gone out intending never to be heard from again, unwilling to confess to those who have looked up to him, that he has been beaten.

The door opened and Rodgers looked about as Carlson entered. To Rodgers came real appreciation of this man whom his father had picked and given

charge of their operations here, even more, had taken into their company on a small basis since that was always a wise plan where economies of operation cannot be personally watched continually. In his way Carlson was a diplomat for he handled the most difficult of these rivermen and the jacks of the lumber camps without the slightest trouble. Harold Rodgers felt a superior affection for him now.

Carlson nodded his head and smiled.

"Lemier and Sven are down at number one cutting," he said. "They can run you down to the railroad with the dogs and be back in three days. The ice is good and they can travel fast. That will be time enough."

There was a slightly nervous twitching about Rodgers' mouth and he rolled one tip of his mustache. Then he lit a cigarette. Carlson laughed. Now he seemed the superior of the two, although he spoke in a deferential fashion.

"I can see that you are still a little worried, Mr. Rodgers," he said, reassuringly. "But you needn't be. Lemier and Sven have perfectly good grudges against him all their own. That's motive enough in the eyes of the law if anything should go wrong, which is impossible. I can prove, too, that Lemier tried to shoot him over near Alexis Creek and might have succeeded if that Indian tracker friend of his

hadn't lost the trail that night. Besides that they've got good jobs here. We pay them better than the others and fifteen hundred dollars is enough to keep them quiet. Besides that, they're not the loose-jawed, drinking kind."

Rodgers puffed on the cigarette repeatedly, inhaling deep. Carlson studied him, and there was a slight clouding of impatience on his face.

"You realize, of course, Mr. Rodgers, that you have not been really connected with it in any way. I'm the one who has done everything. You simply know nothing about it. You were up here as your father used to be, overlooking things during the cutting season. After you left, perhaps a long time afterward, if a suspicious thing happens, how can you be connected with it? As for me, if the worst possible turn of events should come about, I simply deny everything and am glad to give information that Lemier and Sven have had a private fight with Stewart. Lemier himself told me about it."

He studied Rodgers' face and smiled.

"But, then, what can happen? You've been up there and you know what a wilderness it is. In all those miles on miles one man is no more than a stick and there are hundreds, thousands of square miles that even the foot of a trapper never falls on. Furthermore, I want to tell you I appreciate the way

you and your father are taking me in on this new thing the same as you did on the lumbering here. Now you'd better get ready for they'll be here with the sled. Of course, they won't come back here right away. After they take you down to the railroad they'll make a long detour and come out on the river far above here to wait for Stewart on his way down."

Rodgers picked up the letter and followed him out but there was a nervousness still apparent about him and his relief at departing was evident.

CHAPTER XXII

THE winter sun shone in through the window over a world of white silence. The forest beyond the clearing was an enchanted place of mystic white, of lacy branchings on which the snow had clung and frozen. It was a magic circle about an enchanted place. There were frostings on the little panes of glass and the drifts were deep against the berry bushes at the edges of the clearing. Tracks led from the forest to the cabin where MacIntosh had come and gone in his bringing of fresh fuel supplies. It was warm inside but beyond the protection of the cabin, with its comforting blaze in the fireplaces that were in two of the rooms, there was an intense cold and the sun had little effect now.

Edith Mason could see out through the window on this white world from where she lay in the bunk, helpless and gradually weakening. Consciousness had returned and reason, but the fever which seemed a consuming thing came at intervals.

Her head rolled weakly and her eyes sought the wife of Lebeau who sat near the bunk sewing a larigan of moose-hide while her child played about the floor and fretted because he was forced to remain indoors.

Stewart was gone and Edith knew. Her thoughts

were not clear, but she understood. He had gone down to Black House, not to go outside for financial aid for his plans as he had intended, but to get help—for her.

She must not try to talk. Stewart had forbade it, and evidently to prevent any attempt this kindly, strong woman who did not understand everything of which she spoke, had told her of Stewart. In her crude patois, a mixture of French and English, she spoke, unaware of the turmoil, the agony of awakening it brought to the sick girl listening there in the bunk, as the story of his life, of sacrifice after sacrifice for others was unfolded.

She had pneumonia. Lebeau's wife told her that in a matter-of-fact way. She was very sick and Stewart was afraid. He would go to Black House alone, for he was stronger than any of the others and could travel faster than the dog teams now. He would bring the medical missionary, Father Macungie, back with him. Father Macungie was a good man and wise. He knew how to fight the sickness and his friendship for Stewart was great. Surely it was a long trip, three hundred miles on the ice, but Stewart was very strong. It would take eight days for any of the others traveling fast, but Stewart—she did not know. He did many things the others could not.

Edith felt a sense of helpless trust, whelming grati-

tude. In her weakness she saw him on the ice of the river, and it seemed that he looked back at her reassuringly but with deep sadness in his eyes and something else, regret that she had not understood the truth long before.

Now she did understand. From the things Madame Lebeau said she gleaned that which brought overwhelming humiliation, shame, sorrow. He was fighting now for her life and he believed that she had known everything from the beginning and had sought to betray him. If he were only here; if only he could know that at last she understood! Why had she not understood before? She might have known from the way he spoke, from the things she had seen in his cabin that other time, from a dozen and one incidents that all seemed pointing the way. No man could ever hope to attain and hold the power he had over these people unless he had real depth of purpose and quality. Even now she surmised that there were things she did not know about, but she had learned enough; and now he was turning all his powers into the struggle for her life. Edith was aware of her own weakness, fully comprehended the terrible thing that gripped her, and she was helpless. A sudden recurrence of the fever came and ebbed and it seemed that Stewart was there by her side, lending of that vital strength to aid her. He offered unbounded confidence, assurance,

and he would not be beaten. A strange, sublime faith in him came—and she had not merited the help he was giving.

Now she knew and could comprehend why these crude wood folk had believed in and followed him, adhered to him blindly until she came to sow disbelief. There was mental anguish—in spite of everything he was fighting now for her. That thought would not down. He was facing those three hundred miles of ice, perhaps of storms, of the wilderness at its worst, and facing it alone because any effort to aid him would have been a hindrance. He stood alone; she must win and live, or lose and die, perhaps, on what he did.

She saw a figure pass the window. It was Oowakano, the Indian, Stewart's friend. Madame Lebeau went to the door. Oowakano had brought a supply of fresh moose meat for broth and some partridges. She heard him speak briefly to Lebeau's wife, and his words were ominous.

"It will storm soon, to-morrow or the next day, maybe," he said.

There was a sinking at her heart as she realized what that meant, and again it seemed that she saw Stewart there on the ice. He smiled back confidently, but that same sadness was in his eyes.

Why had she been so blind? Bitter self-reproach came constantly. If he or some of these others who

had absorbed the quality of silence from these fastnesses where they lived, had only told her before, as Lebeau's wife did at last when it was too late! She thought of Stewart in softened terms. He was magnificent, fighting a great fight alone for his people, giving up his youth, his all for them and their children, and she had only put more obstacles in his path. Knowing all she had done, he was big enough for this.

As she lay there her thoughts went back over the incidents, over things Lebeau's wife had told her. In the other room among those books were many that were mute testimony. He had gone out before, down to the States, down to school and college to carry forward the education that his mother had given him until her death. There he had developed the seed which she had sowed. How he must have worked and struggled for that thing which men call an education. He had talked to Lebeau and his wife about it, urged them to work and save so that their little son, this boy who played now about the floor here, might have it easier than Stewart had it. That was one of the reasons he had made Lebeau and the others learn to plant things that would give them food in the winter so that all the money from the furs would not go for necessities, so that some of it could be saved for this son of theirs.

And why had he been so anxious for the education? Lebeau's wife did not understand clearly but it was a strange thing, a magic thing. There was much wealth in these lands they owned and the mining education, that was what he called it, taught him to know where these riches were. There was the thing which he called coal, black stones which burned and gave great heat, and oil. That Madame Lebeau knew about for she had seen a lamp in which it gave light. There was a creek over in the hill lands which Lalonge owned and the animals would not drink of its waters sometimes, for there was blue scum on it. She brought lumps of the coal which Stewart had and kept in the cabin.

None among them knew how to take these things out of the earth and Stewart went to learn how. But it took money and Stewart did not have the money. He told them, also, that these things which were in the ground were the reasons why Rodgers wanted their lands and would give them farm lands in the valleys somewhere far away, in exchange. Stewart told them that it would take him a long time, maybe, to find out where these things were hidden in the ground. He had hoped to wait until he was sure and then he would go out and tell about them to honest men who had much money and these men would come and take the things from the earth and

pay them a share of the wealth. Rodgers knew about these things for some of these men who lived here had talked of them when they worked at his mills down the river or with his lumber gangs in the woods. One time Carlson, who was superintendent down there, had sent for Lalonge when he worked in the lumber gang, and the old Rodgers, who was the big man of the company, had been there and had asked Lalonge many questions about this scum on the waters and about Stewart.

Yes, Edith Mason understood it all, now. And she was a part of it. Her father had been the partner of Rodgers in the lumber business and she and her mother still owned the half interest. She felt sick mentally, nauseated, and a fierce rebellion came as she realized what Stewart must think of her.

She visualized him as he had stood above her when she lay in the bunk, and he had stroked her hair and held her hand and called her a little girl. There was a lump in her throat, and her eyes closed. Lebeau's wife had told her more—of the two nights and days when Stewart had not slept, when he had remained ever on the alert, fighting for her life, trying to ward off the pneumonia with an understanding and a doggedness that was inconceivable. And this was the man she had sought to undermine in the faith of these people for whom he had striven so hard. She

knew more, too, now. She'd learned how Stewart had gone to these people and told them to send their children to her so that she might teach them, how he had urged them to come to her on Sundays so that she might read to them of things which were sacred. Could she hope ever to atone? All her barriers had crashed and left her alone in a new world. If she could only see him and tell him. Was it too late? She saw his face again and it seemed to be kindly, understanding, as he leaned over her and smiled. She must live to right the wrong she had done, if for nothing else.

There was the sound of a man's voice outside. It was Lebeau returning and he spoke to the four mongrel huskies that drew his sled which was laden heavily.

Edith sobbed and her breath was like inhaled flame.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ice of the river was swept clear of snow by the wind which had piled the white drifts high against the banks. The surface had been roughened into hummocks at intervals by the quickness of the freeze. The world was a place of majestic beauty, awe-inspiring as the forest clad hills with their new snow shone and scintillated under the touch of the winter sun. It was as though some mighty power had hurled vast tufts of cotton over all the wilderness and then emptied diamonds down to fall in a layer over all. There were iridescent colorings, shooting beams of white and blue that the eye could not separate. The very ice of the river glistened blue.

The forest was a lacy network of roofing to support this world of white and there were fairy caverns under the branches, inviting places from which the spirits of the north peeped out on men, according to the belief of the tribes folk.

Occasionally the wind swirled down along the river, picking up loose snow at the banks and blowing it along over the ice like ghostly cavalry in a mad, irresistible charge that faded when it came against a snow bank or the wall of forest at some turn.

There was ever-changing beauty, cold grandeur, that

the corporeal eye sought in its immensity and could not fasten. This was the infinite brought down to understandable terms and high over all, back beyond the hills, towering grimly, majestic, were the mountains, jutting heights of white through which an occasional cliff protruded its brownish nakedness as though the mighty spear of the Manito himself had cleft away the covering. In this rare, cold atmosphere miles meant nothing to the vision. Even man himself meant nothing. He was less than a dot, a protozoan in the universe. Before the north now his pigmy powers were laughable, pathetic. Here and there he made inroads, but what did it matter? What could it matter when the north unloosed her legions? To one who has seen her in her regal robes of white, ensconced on her throne with winter as her squire, there can be no forgetting.

It was a sight that never palled on Stewart. It stirred him to the soul depths now as he strode along over the ice, the rifle slung in its case atop the caribou hide sleeping bag and pack. He was traveling light and without need of snowshoes here on the river. As he walked along he often looked about at the forest and up toward those mountains, the lure of which had never ceased to make itself felt. They were his. All this was his in that sense that Nature gives herself to those who would have her and under-

stand and cherish her. Perhaps he even had greater understanding and love because of the things he had done, because of his going out to that other kind of a world to study and mingle with people who were different in many ways.

His thoughts went back to the girl he had left in his cabin. Well enough he knew the danger that hovered close about her, this dread thing which even when it seemed conquered would strike at the heart with the spear of death. He saw her again as she had been there, helpless, fast freezing to death in the snow and storm. She had seemed so light and small when he lifted her and carried her along the trail to his cabin, and her face had nestled close against his as he held her tightly so that the warmth of his body might give added fuel to that faint spark of life within her. Again he could feel the soft contact of her cheek and it brought a thrill like the glow of rich wine.

Stewart shook his head as one coming out of a dream that he does not want to continue. His stride was longer and he looked straight ahead. The sun seemed fading out as in a mist and he looked up, aware that the short winter day was ebbing. There was the sharp whistling and rush of the wind among the trees, and it was cold. This was the second day. He had gone on throughout the night, stopping only

for short intervals of rest. He was very tired and his legs ached. Soon he must camp and build a fire, but a torturing urge pushed him on. He must not think of himself. What mattered an exhausted body? It was for her life—for her—she seemed pleading now, and he could not fail. In his thoughts was something that would not down, something that seemed to laugh at him, to beat back to the front again and again. He put it aside sternly, would not admit it, but it was there and constantly recurred. It accused him and made him admit that since that first day he'd seen her the vision of her face had been there constantly. He'd avoided her, held himself aloof through fear that any admission of what it meant might make him weaken. Now it grew beyond all bounds. Carrying her to his cabin that day, watching over her as she lay so helpless in his bunk had been the spark to the explosion, and he knew as he'd known a long time even though he would not admit it. He loved her. If only she had come to aid him rather than oppose him in everything he'd given his life up to! It hurt. She could never know. To her he must always seem impersonal, distant, coldly aloof.

He looked up toward the sky. The sun was gone and that misty haziness was settling. Realization came with his glance. That settling pall of gray portended the storm and his jaws tightened grimly. Here

was a new antagonist. He was tired but now he could not stop or he would be forced to battle the storm over the last part of the journey, and it would be only a few more miles. Two days and one night for that trip of one hundred and fifty miles! It taxed even him. He turned toward the bank, for there the undulating shore line broke up the force of that wind which was increasing in power and penetrating cold as it lashed down over the open space of the river. There was something mournful, a dirge-like sound in it, and occasionally it arose to eerie whistling.

Above it came something sharp, the quick, ripping sound of a rifle shot from the opposite shore, and there was the momentary sensation of hurt, an expression of surprise and anger on the face of Stewart. He seemed to reel under the impact of a heavy blow and his left hand arose in a sudden gesture to his right shoulder. Then he leaped toward the snow-covered brush on the bank and was gone among it as another shot clattered on the stillness, joining its echoes to the first. He felt the shock of the second bullet as it struck the butt of his rifle and broke it but was deflected. He was among the trees now, a thick growing copse of aspen poplars with a screen of willows beyond, and he stopped and turned.

He was cornered, wounded, surrounded it might be,

but there was a dogged thing that came up within him. He was not beaten—yet.

Once he tried to lift his right arm to reach for the thong that held his rifle case fast, but he could not and it took him longer to unfasten it with his left hand. Slowly he drew back the case and saw the shattered butt. His face was grim. A one-armed man could not be so very accurate with a rifle. He held it up coolly as though testing his own powers. It was like some huge, heavy pistol and could not be fired from the shoulder. There was blood that came out through the hole in his mackinaw where the bullet had penetrated and he could feel the stickiness of it on his hand which was numbing fast. He dared not take off the mackinaw and loosen the heavy shirt to stop the blood flow for he knew the terror that comes often to a fresh wound when the cold is intense.

His mouth was tight and there was a bulging at his jaws while strange fires burned brightly in his eyes and he went back toward the river's edge, taking every advantage of the opportunity for protection that the trees afforded. There was a jutting bank that hid a turn and he moved toward it. Once he stopped to bend the injured arm, placing the hand inside the mackinaw so that there would be no telltale spots of red on the snow. They must not know he was

wounded. He reached that rising bank and peered out carefully.

That rifleman or riflemen was on the other side and below him, cutting him off from Black House. But there might be others and on this side of the river, too. He turned slightly and moved his head about to see through the laciness of the forest. There was movement, something dark; it must be a man. Stewart dropped to his knees and lifted the broken rifle. He was unsteady and rested it against the bole of a sapling to aim. He had never realized that half a rifle could be so heavy, and he pressed it close against the tree and fired. It was an unsure thing but he thought the other had fallen or dived from sight. The recoil almost tore the broken rifle from his hand and he could not reload it hurriedly. Once again he sought to locate that other but the forest was a place of half lights now and Stewart arose and turned into the depths.

There was a nauseating weakness that came and a dizziness. He steadied by leaning against one of the trees and his mind cleared slowly. They had cut him off from Black House. He wondered how many of them there could be and he saw it all. Out here in the forest, in these vast reaches of the primeval they could go to any lengths, and who would there be to interfere? He might be killed and left a score of

feet back from the river-bank and no human being would ever know. Above him the cornel and willows would unfurl their leaves in thick luxuriance, the snows would come and go, life would go on unending and none except the wild creatures would ever guess. His own people among whom he had grown to manhood and for whom his best thoughts and highest efforts had been given would not know. Would they care? Perhaps. They might even believe the things that this girl had said of his selfishness, of his desire to possess what they had for himself. They might even believe that he had gone out because he realized that he was beaten, pretending that he had gone to bring help for her. No one would ever raise more than a passing question. But the end was not yet. They had not even brought him to his knees yet. This was not for himself; it was for her who had been against everything he had fought for, her whom he loved. She did not know the depths of him, of his fighting powers, of the determination that had been born in him. Nor did these others. What did it matter if they were between him and Black House, if they might close on him here in the forest? Again he saw her lying there in the bunk, pleading, begging him to save her life, it seemed—and she would never know.

The wound was forgotten. He faced toward

Black House. He could not emerge onto the river again for there they would pick him off in cowardly fashion, hiding in the forest. All right! If they resorted to the forest so would he and it would be a test of the skill and powers of each. He would give them battle step for step, match strategy with strategy, strength with strength. The forest had always been his friend. He was a hunted thing and like all hunted things the forest in its density offered the chance he wanted. As the wounded bull moose that seeks the densest coverts he went back into the forest, away from the river-bank and then turned in a great half-circle toward Black House. He must get through and he would! All the powers of Rodgers, of Carlson and all the others would not stop him. A grim thought was uppermost in his mind. Let them follow. He was the equal of any white man in the woods. In many things he matched the skill of Oowakano. They had struck at him, wounded him with the first blow, driven him to retreat, and he knew that now they must pursue, that they could not help play the rest of the hand out since the first card had fallen. They would try desperately to stop him from getting through to Black House. And in back, it seemed, there was a girl who urged him on, whose mute appeal sought to steady him. In this, at least, she wanted him to win. That was a grim, an un-

worthy thought. It was bitter and he crushed it down.

Darkness was on the thickets and the wind blew something wet against his face, the first messenger of the storm. He found it an effort to face and meet that wind in a test of strength as it battered against his body, and pains were coming in his shoulder, hot pains that were a succession of twinges with every movement. Tragedy hovered very close in the forest aisles, and Stewart plunged on through the wilderness and the night.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN the cabin of the Reverend Macungie a lone candle burned as a glowing coal in a pit, revealing the meagre furnishings, the row of books, the shelf against the log wall containing bottles and tins, the scant supply of medicines so necessary here where the Word must go hand in hand with practical things. The embers of logs sputtered and brightened in the fireplace. It was warm and the wind had risen to a mourning howl outside. Flames leaped from the embers and caught on the fresh log, brightening the interior and driving back the shadows where the missionary sat on the edge of his crude bunk with Stewart, who rested back as though very tired. There was a bandage on his shoulder but the dark stain was coming through, growing slowly larger. His shirt was open and he breathed quickly as one who has run a long race.

On the floor lay his broken rifle and the mackinaw. The Reverend Macungie was speaking confidently.

"You've got to think of yourself, my boy. You are nearer absolute exhaustion than you know, and you've lost considerable blood. I'll go back up with you, but I will not start to-night. That's final—not because I'm unwilling, but because you could not stand

it. Just think for a moment. Here you've done a hundred and fifty miles in two days practically; you've been wounded and you're weak. How you ever did it, I don't know. Now you'd start right out again to go back. Why, you'd collapse and then I'd have to stop. I wouldn't be able to go on and leave you."

His hand rested on Stewart's knee.

"Look at it sensibly. You're not superhuman. You remain here to-night and we'll start in the morning together."

His thin lips tightened and his nostrils seemed to quiver.

"Then they'll not dare to harm you further, and I shall go down to Hedges immediately and tell him of the reason for your trip; of her lying up there with pneumonia. He has better dogs than mine. I'll demand a dog sled and their aid."

Stewart lifted his hand and arose from his reclining position.

"Father Macungie," he said, "I'll ask nothing from them, not even for her, and I'm going to start back to-night. I've rested here for several hours now, and all I've seen has been her face in front of me. She's been calling to me, begging me to come back. I see her now, lying there helpless and white. God! I can't wait here! It's tearing at my heart. You say the crisis may come in five days or nine; you can't

tell without being there. You tell me that when it comes she'll probably need medicine for her heart and you've got it here. If you won't come to-night give it to me and I'll go now, right away. I can't let her lie there and die. Tell me how to use it and I'll go.

"You say you'd get a better dog team than yours from Hedges. What good would that do? Hell is loose outside. Dogs couldn't make any time in that and you ought to know it. The drifts will be deep and piling. You know how they flounder until it packs, and when it's loose and frozen hard it cuts their feet. You'd have to save them most of the way and couldn't ride. Give me the medicine and I'll go now."

"You'll not!"

The Reverend Macungie arose and faced Stewart. He saw the grim lines on the younger man's face, the tight mouth and the eyes that were sunken and burning with something besides the reflections of the firelight.

"Father Macungie, I'm going with or without that medicine. She needs me—she's calling to me."

The missionary shook his head slowly.

"Stewart," he said, "I've always admired your determination," he said, "and this is the first time I've ever known you to be a fool."

He came a step closer and rested his hand on

Stewart's good arm, looking closely into his eyes, searching. A moment they were silent, then he spoke again.

"I see," he said, "and I understand. It would hit a man like you terribly hard. Does she know?"

Stewart's head dropped forward, then he turned slightly and his eyes were like glowing embers in the fireplace.

"I'm sorry," the missionary said. "I'll go, and we'll take my team if you don't want to ask for help from them. Dog for dog they're just as good, but I've got only four. You mustn't forget I'm not as young as you and I'll probably need them."

CHAPTER XXV

AS they departed from the cabin, Stewart with the broken rifle slung back in its case, the missionary carrying a revolver as a possible protection against marauding wolf packs which did not discriminate, two shadowy forms fell back into the forest that came close about the clearing above the scattered town. One of the dogs in the traces barked, then all was silent.

Black House seemed a place of death. Not a light burned in any of the cabins some distance below that of the missionary. They went down toward the river together, silent, well aware of the ordeal that lay ahead, and the missionary guided the sled and vainly urged Stewart to ride.

Over the wilderness came an endless succession of fierce sobbing gusts. Chaos was loosed, turmoil of gargantuan proportions. Nature was mad, a raving thing of powers beyond human comprehension. Man in the fullness of his strength could hope to combat it for a while but even the trap lines must be abandoned during such a storm. The wild artillery of the pole was unleashing broadside after broadside, hurtling down out of the north, inanimate fury that knew no bounds.

From the mountain tops the clouds of snow mist were blown out over the world like impenetrable blanketings to shut out the heavens. Wall on wall, rank on rank the flakes were driven, hard flakes that were turned to white ice, that cut the unprotected skin like a barrage of metal splints. Whole snowbanks, drifts many tons in weight, were lifted as though by volcanic force from beneath and hurled across the face of the world to form new drifts and be lifted again. It was the play of giants.

The forest crest bent, the infantry of mortal armies battered low under the wild assaults of supernatural macemen. The white roof frozen fast to the upper branches was torn loose and whirled across creation to find new lodgment. No living thing of the wild moved. In the deepest recesses of their yards the moose cowered close together, seeking the protection of some overhanging bank or the thickest maze of tree trunks. Under the densest coverts the wolves curled beneath the snow, waiting for a cessation of that frightfulness in the presence of which even they were awed. The wolverene and all the lesser killers had given over their quest while Nature was in her travail.

Only man and his dogs moved abroad in this incarnate fury, challenging the powers of the north. For days on end this storm might rage and in the cabins of the red trappers strange, mystic incanta-

tions would go up to the Manito to ward off the threats of the evil ones who inhabit the forbidden lands of the north.

Now there was a slight cessation of the new fall of snow, but it was a momentary thing, for the wind-whipped mist was dense. And the wind was cold, bitter, hard and metallic. There was a change, an odd mixture that came through the air, hail mingling with the white mist of the driven snow that had no rest. And through it all man moved. Stewart and the missionary with the dog sled hugged the very edge of the ice, near the shore line, and they were bent forward, literally leaning against the wind that swooped down out of the north. Occasionally Stewart staggered slightly but his stride was long. The hours went by in darkness and the miles passed slowly. They were in single file, Stewart in front. Once he halted like a stricken thing and his good arm covered his face as though to ward off these blasts that burned like molten lead in their iciness. He was rolling in his movements but morning must be near and then they would stop for a short rest. He needed it desperately. Neither spoke of riding for each knew that the strength of the dogs must be conserved for final, desperate need.

Stewart's body was a worn-out mechanism that must go on only because the power which directed

it still held. He lifted one foot, wavered, then sunk it into the snow again. There was a stoppage for a moment, then he lifted the other. And this had been going on for miles and miles, for years, centuries, it seemed to him. His thighs and back ached with the effort of it and the cramps of exhaustion came in his legs, but he plunged on unsteadily, ever on, though he looked back occasionally and knew that strange warning sense of danger, of pursuit.

The new day came at last, but there was no real daylight, merely a graying that would last for a short period until darkness with the aid of the storm gained its hold on the world again.

The missionary fell and insisted on stopping when Stewart helped him up and would have put him on the sled. In a protected spot on the snow-covered bank they succeeded in building a fire after great effort and patience. The dogs were fed and immediately dug in close to sleep. Father Macungie was tired but he spoke of Stewart.

"You've got to sleep now," he said. "Even you are a human being."

Stewart's words were thick, heavy.

"I'll sleep—Father—when I've—I've gotten you through—safely."

But the world faded out before him and he slept, a tormented, restless sleep. There was something that

prodded him, pulled and urged him constantly to waken. She was waiting, sinking nearer and nearer the border line. Her life depended on his speed, on his ability to bring the aid she needed. It seemed that he was far down in a dark pit and her face was high above, looking down with soft eyes that beckoned him pleadingly. She reached down for him and he was awake, conscious of that danger sense. Something threatening, ominous, hovered close somewhere in the forest. Stewart knew that the pursuit had not lagged, that near at hand were those who waited only the chance to kill him. Also he knew that they would not wait too long. Before the end of this trail was reached they would strike and in striking they would take the life of the missionary too, if that were necessary. Stewart's thoughts were clear; a plan formulated in his mind. The Reverend Macungie must get safely through; nothing else mattered, and Stewart must make the sacrifice. The missionary was asleep and Stewart wakened him.

The short day was ebbing, giving way to the mephitic blackness again, and the storm raged unabated, hurling its powers down on the wilderness.

They went back to the river's ice and plunged on. It became a dull, ceaseless battle. Imagination, conscious thought had to be stifled, beaten down so that nothing but the purpose that urged them on could

be considered. At intervals they stopped as men will who have toiled long at a tremendous task, and the missionary, with all his wiry body hardened by years here in the north knew that he was nearing exhaustion. What, thought he, must Stewart's condition be with that wound and the tax upon his body of the trip down?

Stewart did not waste time or strength in words, and they went on, halting at last to build another fire by slow, careful methods. They ate of the dried meat the sled carried and rested until morning came, gray and dull, bringing rising powers to the wind. Then they plunged on again along the open river, and to Stewart came the realization that the end was nearing for him. His body did not respond now, but the missionary must not know. A little further and he could go on alone with the sled, for the goal would be within reach then. Stewart's mouth was very tight and his breath came in gaspings.

Fierce fires burned in his arm and shoulder and the fever was mounting. His eyes were rimmed with red circles. The world of dull white all about him was tinted with red, fading pinks that were the fever colors. The wind battered at him as though solid walls of masonry fell against his body, all but flattening him in the snow, and once he stumbled and lay still a moment while the driven white mists swirled

about and sought to cover him. But he was up, slowly, grimly, to one knee, then an effort and he forged ahead once more, as the lead dog of the team was at his side.

He saw that the missionary leaned heavily on the pole of the sled and tilted it without knowing, making the task of those four big animals harder. Now if ever Stewart must mask his own weakness for the crisis had come. The world of whites and reds reeled about him. His legs were giving way and he fought a terrible fight with himself to keep from caving in at the waist, doubling up to sink in the snow. There was the empty sled and the powers of the dogs had been saved as much as possible—to carry the missionary through when his strength gave way. Stewart knew that the time had come. Wiry and strong Macungie might be, used to the hardships of the north in winter, but his hair was gray, his face lined by the passing of many more years than Stewart had lived. And Stewart knew what that meant as he saw him leaning heavily on the sledge pole. Macungie was nearing exhaustion and their only hope lay in the dogs. Purposely they had avoided riding until now, each saving the team to carry the other through. Now Stewart realized that he could go on no longer in this fashion. Another half mile at this pace and he would collapse, but the team could carry forward,

though they, too, were plainly tired and Stewart saw the red spots where their paws were giving way in this brittle, unpacked snow. One man they could bring through—two they could not.

He steadied and marshaled the last vestiges of strength. The team had come to a stop and sank to their bellies in the snow, panting despite the cold, the breath spuming like steam jets from their nostrils.

Macungie sat down on the sled wearily and Stewart laughed deliberately. He moved slowly to the sled and rested against the pole.

"We're as good as through," he said, and there was a slight halt to his speech as though it required tremendous effort. The missionary did not answer.

"You ride the rest of the way," he went on in that measured fashion, "and I'll follow, because I'd —because the dogs can make better time than I can. I'll do it easily if I travel slowly."

The missionary shook his head, and he, too, spoke with effort.

"No—we'll make it together, or ——"

He tried to get up but sagged back onto the sled and winced as the cramps of exhaustion doubled his legs.

Slowly, unsteadily, Stewart came to his side, pushed his feet on the sled and helped him to a sitting posture, drawing the envelope of the sled about him.

"Father Macungie," he said, "I came for you to save her life. You know the way to my cabin and these dogs will obey you until the finish."

The missionary's mind was clear, only his body had given way under the strain of it. This he had expected to do for Stewart, and now it was he who was being put on the sled. He marveled at the powers of this younger man.

"I can't leave you here, Stewart," he said. "You are done in completely."

Again Stewart laughed that forced laugh, and drew himself erect.

"I'm not," he said, "and I'll be all right but I can't hold the speed."

"I won't go," Macungie said, "unless you'll promise to make camp there on shore and wait until I send some of the others down for you."

Stewart nodded and handed him the long dog whip.

"I'll wait," he said, "somewheres in there."

He pointed toward the forest that rose from the ice at the river's edge.

There was a brief clasping of their mittened hands, then the missionary's voice, "Hy!" and the dogs were up. "Mush!" he commanded, and they leaned against the traces, the sled went forward and Stewart's shoulders slumped down. A moment he stood looking after it, then his head came forward slowly and

he stared at the ice with a blank expression. Minutes passed and he reeled drunkenly under a gust of wind. Then he turned slowly to look all about and went toward the forest, wavering and stumbling. Somehow he attained it, clambering up the steep bank, and went on. At intervals of a few moments he stopped, leaning heavily against the trunks of trees, and looked back.

They knew and they were coming. Probably they had seen the departure of the missionary with his sled, and Macungie had never guessed. That vague sense of danger, of warning, had been present in Stewart continually. It was the feeling of being watched, the warnings to a hunted thing. Without it he might not have noted other incidents, but he'd seen the dogs peering back through the forest when they'd camped, and once one of them had growled. It might have been a wolf passing near by in the depths —but Stewart knew. Throughout that journey, through the storm they had followed, and it had been an easy task for there had been no effort to throw them off the trail. They had merely to follow the river. In the fullness of his powers they would have been no match for him, but he was wounded, weak, and the missionary was an old man. They must have been close enough to see when he separated from Macungie, probably had been hiding in the brush,

waiting for this, knowing that he was wounded, hoping that soon or late their chance would come. And they would have struck ultimately even with the missionary there, might even have raised their rifles against him also, to silence him, for the chances were all that none but the wilderness would ever know. Stewart had recognized the danger throughout and suspected that only near the finish would they resort to such an extreme when they saw there was no other way. And Macungie must get through. Stewart had intended that it should be this way from the start, for the missionary's life must not be risked.

It was Stewart and Stewart only that they really wanted. Now in the forest, he knew they were tracking him as the hunter tracks the wounded bull moose in the dense thickets where he does not dare draw close enough for a finishing shot but forces the quarry on until utter exhaustion comes. Eventually it turns in its desperation and fury and skulks, waiting, perhaps hoping that its persecutors will come within reach.

That thought fastened itself in Stewart's mind. It brought slight new strength and he plunged ahead, facing into the raging forces of the north, reeling, falling, stumbling on. His face was drawn and his eyes burned brightly. There was a reddened tint that was not the touch of the wind.

The blackness of night was settling and through the

haze of Stewart's mind, above the purpose that was set, there came realization that this night must be the last, that he must go even more slowly than his will demanded, for the wracked body could not meet the demands of that will. He must conserve what little power remained and then go down at last, beaten, his great fight for his people lost, his purpose in life denied, but not without taking these persecutors with him, and not without winning this one fight for her. And he knew, and there was a mad pride in the knowing, that they, too, must find this hunting him down a task that taxed their physical strength to the utmost.

Throughout the hours of darkness somehow he went on, stopping often to rest and gasp in great lungfuls of the icy air, and he did not know when the fall of new flakes stopped for the wind whipped and churned the mists up constantly afresh. But it was colder, bitter, the temperature dropping many degrees, and at last the wind ebbed and it seemed strangely, oppressively quiet, a lull during the night when nature gathered new forces to unleash with the coming of day.

Then through the forest came a sound, a long wailing that pulsed and throbbed in its echoing power over the reaches of the wild. It died away, rolling mournfully and was taken up afresh in the distance. Stark

hunger gnawed at the gray killers of the forest, for the year of no rabbits was upon them and now the law of the pack would come. Deep in the recesses they would gather and by some strange method of understanding the leader of greatest prowess and cunning would be selected before they took the blood trail. Death would now ride with their passing through the forest aisles.

Stewart heard that cry and was lifted from himself by the knowledge of what it meant. These were merely other killers that he had combatted. And this was their first gathering. They would not attack man—yet, at least, not a man in the fullness of his strength. Two or three days more unless they dragged down a moose or caribou, and it would be different. Even now if a man were wounded or weak they might—and they could tell. Those keen nostrils would know. Stewart realized that new enemies were abroad, but he felt no fear. This fight could end only in one way. By efforts that were sheerly superhuman he might keep going throughout the night. By resting at shorter and shorter intervals and fighting his own body weakness there was a chance that as the gray day came over the forest he might be able to turn and give battle in that one burst before oblivion. And then, what matter if the killers be of the forest or of the cabins of men? They would

know that the conquest had not been easy. One great joy came to Stewart. Without him the missionary's speed must have been much greater, and that meant life—for her. He sagged against a spruce and its branchings spread, opened like arms that enfolded and clasped him close as though the wilderness itself sought to comfort him. It was good. It seemed warm. But though he was beyond reason now the strength of purpose was not dimmed. The tree was comforting, a siren; it had a face that beckoned and smiled, her face as he had seen it when he lifted her out of the snow and also when she lay in his bunk and he looked down upon her. She was trying to hold him now, to lure him with a smile that was inviting, clasping him close to make him remain until those others could catch up. Fiercely he pushed aside the branchings and went on. Reason returned and he fought to hold it, afraid that in the delirium he might swerve from his purpose, from his way that led toward the place that was his home.

Men had called him a fighting man and he hated it secretly but nurtured the belief among them for the added power that it would give where such power was needed with certain types. Now he was a fighting man, fighting his own body, to hold what strength remained.

Again he heard that throbbing cry of the wolf and

he drew the broken rifle from its case and ran toward the sound with the new strength of madness. He would kill among the killers also. He tripped and fell headlong into the snow so that his face was buried. A moment he lay quietly, and the cold, wet touch of it on his cheeks had its effect. Slowly his head arose and he looked about. Where was he? How had he come here? His hand still clasped the rifle. Gradually his thoughts gathered and he felt the pains of his body that was numbing. Very weakly he arose and turned back toward the bank of the river, resting more and more frequently. His senses were keener and that was strange. A familiarity came to him. He knew this region and was nearing the place he had thought of always as home. Here was a rising embankment. His purpose of grimness came back strongly renewed and he panted like a dog that has run long in the traces over soft snow, but he reached the top of the embankment at last and went straight ahead a short distance. Then he turned in a great half-circle and came back far away from the embankment, doubling on his trail which would be plain now that the snow had ceased and the wind ebbed. Here was a clump of banksian pines, thick, low. Amid them he waited and resisted the desire to lie down.

They would come, these gunmen and killers, and

he would be waiting. Deliberately he fought off the inertia that presaged the finish and mentally gathered the last dregs of his resources, fighting a strange fight of the mental to overcome the physical. Like the bull moose that turns before death to give battle to its pursuers, doubling back on its track to wait for them and trap them at close quarters, he waited.

Over the forest there was a graying. A low wind soughed among the topmost branches and brought a soft, swishing sound. Motionless, leaning close against a tree trunk Stewart stood and his breathing came in quick gaspings.

In the forest where he looked something stirred. Then he saw them and the hoods of their capotes were back in their eagerness. He recognized them and it was as he had expected. Lemier was in the lead and in back of him came the other, the one he knew as Sven. They were walking rapidly through the snow, peering straight ahead and Stewart felt that he knew their thoughts. He had not collapsed as they might have expected. Here were his tracks and he was still going, indomitable. He was almost back to this place where there was a chance for safety. Now they could not wait for him to fall and lie still. They must overtake him, drag him down as the wolf pack drags down the wounded quarry.

Stewart held the rifle against the tree trunk and

pressed the weight of his body against his arm to steady it. Thirty feet away Lemier strode in front of that muzzle and there was a burst of flame. Lemier reeled and fell but Stewart knew that the bullet had not carried death, that the other's shoulder was merely shattered. And as quickly as he had fired he dropped the broken rifle. There was a surge of all the mental power he had gathered, dominating his physical weakness supremely. He was strong again, a glorious burst of it possessed him and he rushed upon the other. A moment they rocked together and fell in the snow. One of Sven's hands tore loose and came up, seeking to gouge at the eyes and Stewart's one good hand released its hold and whipped up in a weak overhand punch. Then they rolled afresh and the snow was tossed up as though caribou bulls fought for mastery.

Moaning, Lemier dragged himself away, knowing that this wound in his shoulder must be stopped in its bleeding. He did not look toward the others where Stewart was atop the yellow-haired man who had found the handle of his sheath knife and drew it forth. There was a momentary writhing struggle and again they rolled convulsively and now Stewart was beneath the other and lay quietly.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN the doorway of his cabin where the trees grew in a close girdling circle, a magic circle of white now, and the tiny creek that went tumbling past into the bottoms in summer was frozen almost solid, Oowakano stood and looked out now. Four husky dogs sat about in the snow, looking toward him eagerly and occasionally licking their chops, for the Indian still held an extra chunk of meat. But the dog for which it was intended was not there and Oowakano knew that there was no need to think twice over the affairs of this great animal which Stewart had left with him. There was something about it, something that was above these others and it did not need to depend upon the bounty of man.

Stewart had obtained it as a pup from one of the Hare tribesmen who came down from the lake country far to the north and Stewart had raised it and broken it as a leader, probably more for the pleasure that it gave him than for any intention of using it in such fashion. To him only it admitted allegiance and toward Oowakano and Violet Lalonge a certain distant friendship. Once more the Indian called, then went back into the cabin and his four husky dogs curled up in the snow, while down in the bottoms the gray patched dog of Stewart lifted his head and his sharp

ears came slightly forward as he heard the call of the Indian. A moment he stood thus, listening, then went on among the thickets and there was all the stealth of a wild thing in his movements. In a wind-swept glade he halted and sniffed. There a fox had passed and the dog knew no keen interest. Further on was a protected stretch where a steep bank, overhanging and brush cloaked, had turned the wind away. There were the tracks of many feet in the snow and the mane of the great dog bristled. Eagerly he searched among them and his nose told him the story of the wolf pack's passing, a dozen of them, the black and gray runners of the depths.

Of them he knew no fear. Perhaps that part of him which was the heritage from these wild killers told him how to meet them. Frequently they killed the lesser sledge dogs but his own father had been the son of a monster pack leader in the Bear Lake country where the red men trapped them alive often for just such purpose. And in this dog were many of the qualities of that pack leader, the tireless muscles finely drawn, the magnificent chest and shoulders and the broad head that told of terrific power. Those Indians knew well how to breed this species for the traces to obtain endless stamina and speed. And with the dog cross they added greater weight and tractability. It was a superb combination.

Now the dog went on in that shambling lope in which his hind quarters seemed to lower away backward. He followed in the trail of the pack, knowing well that now in the daytime they had disbanded and would run only at night until later in the season when the winter's grip upon them overruled all of their true instincts. Here they had turned and gone down through a valley toward the river, but the dog did not turn yet. Further on the brush was thicker on the slopes above the river and there were varied berry growths with their fruit dried on the branches and affording winter food to many things of the wild.

There the fool hens would be now and as he neared that vast brush-covered region the traveling was easier for there the wind had packed the snow down. His advance became more cautious now and he stalked as carefully as though he had been born a part of the wild. Once he stopped and lifted his nose to test the air that came over the snow. It brought the scent of moose. He turned and loped off up-wind with fresh interest, crossing the slope and descending, and there was no hesitation. Two miles, perhaps three, he held straight ahead without turning and then he seemed suddenly to slink down lower in his lope. Here was a mound-like hill and at last he turned so that he could cross it and come down above instead of around its base. Then he crouched

and crept forward. There was an overhang on its southern side and he lay among the trees and looked down on where the moose herd had gathered and were packing their yard.

There was a colossal bull with great, palmated antlers and a wide shovel, a lesser youngling that was tolerated merely, and two cows, one with her yearling progeny, five in all. Over an area of perhaps a few hundred square feet they stalked back and forth from one copse of browse to another, packing the snow solid. And there were alleys which led off through the drifts to clumps of birch and poplars. The red trappers finding a yard would have known without further signs that the weeks to come would bring intense storms, for which the moose were preparing, packing as it came so that their way to food would not be barred and also that they might have room to meet with mighty hoofs and antlers the onslaughts of any marauders.

Among the drifts where their long legs sank deeply they would be easy prey, but here in the yards they could exact terrible toll and perhaps even turn the wolf pack or the mountain cougar.

The dog lay watching and saw that they paced back and forth, breaking new lanes through the snow and packing them down, occasionally stopping to browse at the brush or tips.

Then a faint sound came and he was tense, alert, half rising from his crouch. The heads of the moose came up also and they were motionless, their big ears forward and all looking in the direction of the river. That sound was a rifle shot, distant, rolling over the hills.

The dog arose stealthily and moved off. He broke into that lope which seemed shambling, deliberate, but covered distance at a deceiving rate. At last he emerged above the slope that led down toward the river bank and he heard faint sounds as of the breath forced from men's bodies by their efforts. Then there was a suppressed cry of hurt, a voice that he recognized and he leaped forward to emerge beyond the pine clump where Stewart writhed beneath the other as the knife lifted again.

There was a whirlwind of gray through the snow and the yellow-haired man screamed as the knife dropped from his hand. He struggled up and his arm was naked, red where great fangs had torn through the mackinaw and shirt. That gray thing surged past him again, a wolf, a dog, the vengeful spirit of the wilderness—he did not know which. He screamed an oath again and fell, reaching for the knife, to be bowled over by the impact of the dog as its hot breath was on his face and he threw up his arms for protection. He struggled up and sought to kick, but it

was all about him and the mackinaw was torn from his shoulders by fangs that slashed and slashed anew.

Abruptly he turned and fled and terror was in his heart as he sought safety from this thing which could tear him down where he would be helpless in the snow. Once, twice the dog was at him, and its fangs bit through the heavy larigans at his ankle to the bone, but he tore away and ran floundering through the snow while Stewart struggled weakly up and held his one hand to his side where the knife had penetrated his mackinaw. Stewart reeled and the white world danced before him. Where were the others, his persecutors? He could not see them as he sought to face them to give battle anew. Like one of the great bears of the mountains, wounded and with life ebbing fast, he waited, staggering a step forward, holding himself up and asking no quarter. This was the end of the trail. They had closed and won and through the haze that was settling there was a consciousness of the final blow expected, but no regrets overwhelmed him now.

A blankness of expression was coming to his face and his mouth smiled. He put out his one good hand as though to ward off something, then fell forward in the snow and lay quietly a moment. Why didn't they come now? He could not strike back. Slowly he pushed up into a sitting position and looked about,

but he could not see well. There was a dark, shadowy form that neared and he sought to fend it off. It was a wolf and it was reaching for his throat. There was something warm on his face, something moist. He struck at it with that one good hand. He would strangle it, fight it to the last. They were wolves and he had thought they were men. His fingers touched the mane of the dog and reason fought to attain mastery. This was Sarge, his dog. Where had he come from? Stewart tried to speak but no sound came and that smile was on his lips again.

What had he been doing? Where was he? His cabin must be near and he would go in to think it over. Then came sudden revulsion. She was there and she had brought this upon him and his people. He knew now. He was dying, beaten; they had left him here out in the wilderness to die for they would not kill him because of the possibility that it might be discovered. That was laughable. Here only the wild would ever know and it would not tell. Well, he would not die. He would go to the cabin of Oowakano which was back in the hills. He would get up and run toward it. What did he care for the depth of the snow or the forest? There was a burst of renewing strength and he attained his feet and ran a few steps like a drunken man reeling forward, then fell headlong and where he fell the snow was red.

Then he looked up again and his eyes were dull. Very slowly he crept forward and the dog was at his side, looking down on him. Once it whimpered and when he lay still it came to him and fastened its teeth in the collar of his mackinaw. Valiantly it tugged, bracing its feet in the snow and dragging with all its power.

Stewart moved. This was annoying, this thing that would not let him sleep. He was impatient. It ceased and he heard a whimpering sound. It brought consciousness that he did not want. It seemed to beckon him on and he was very tired, but it was insistent and he sought to arise.

Twice he fell forward, sprawling. Vaguely he knew that there was a purpose that he must not forget. What was it? He could not remember but it had something to do with his getting to the cabin of Oowakano. Someone was trying to take the cabin and all his possessions away from the Indian who had always been his closest friend, his boyhood intimate. He was a boy again himself and Oowakano was waiting for him. They were going to trap together and after that his mother would read to both of them. But where had Sarge come from? He didn't have Sarge then. That was strange, but it was too much effort to think and that could wait until later. He must reach the cabin of Oowakano. Little by little

he crept forward up the hillside and across the edge of a clearing. Now he was on a trail that seemed familiar but he did not want to go that way. It was too long. He could go directly through the woods and across the hilltop. Once he sank through the snow crust and it seemed warm in the soft snow beneath. He would rest a few minutes, but the dog was at him again and it tried to drag him forward. He sought to push it away but could not. It was very annoying, but he went on, creeping slowly and where he passed the snow was red.

The world was becoming black. Again the snow crust gave way and he lay still. That blackness was settling closer. He was warm. Once more the dog sought to pull him forward, but it could not. Minutes passed. He lay there motionless and did not hear as the head of the dog went back and its deep throbbing bark sounded to the gray sky.

A white flake settled through the branches and another. They came more frequently and again the dog threw back its head and howled dismally as it sat beside the man.

CHAPTER XXVII

AT Stewart's cabin Edith Mason smiled weakly as consciousness and reason returned. She was very weak but the intense fever was gone and she breathed more easily. Her mind was very clear. The crisis had passed and she had vague memories of the night before. She had been sinking deep, deep into blackness and a man had come, an old man who was so exhausted that Lebeau had had to help him to the side of her bunk. He'd given her something that had lifted her back out of that deep blackness, back to consciousness. It had acted very quickly and he'd sat on the side of her bunk, occasionally forcing something into her mouth. A sudden reaction came and she'd heard him tell Lebeau and his wife that everything would be all right now. She knew what that meant and a great peace came to her. She'd also heard Lebeau address this man as Father Macungie and then she understood. She'd heard of him. He was the medical missionary down at Black House. Stewart must have brought him, but where was Stewart?

As she lay there with confused thoughts the missionary had answered that. Perhaps they thought she could not hear or would not understand when he

told Lebeau about the trip, of the attempt to kill Stewart and where he'd left him. Father Macungie urged Lebeau to go immediately with a sled and bring him here. Stewart said he'd wait, camped there by the river's edge. He was exhausted and Father Macungie was afraid he might become delirious from the effects of the wound and wander. He'd urged Lebeau to make all possible speed.

After that Edith could not remember what had happened. In sheer weakness she'd fallen asleep, but now she was wide awake and morning had come. Had Lebeau returned with Stewart? She wondered. She could see out through the window and by turning her eyes she looked at the bunk opposite. There was the figure of a man fully clothed and she thought at first it was Stewart. It was the missionary and he lay very quietly.

Something moving past the window made her look and it was Oowakano. He came to the door and she heard Madame Lebeau. There were words in a low tone that she could not understand and then very faintly from the forest came a dismal howl.

She heard Oowakano's voice again and the words were audible.

"The great dog howls in his loneliness for Stewart."

Madame Lebeau spoke.

"So they howl when one ees die. But here we

have no one who die for the Pere Macungie he say now she live."

Again that long drawn, quavering cry came from the forest, faint and wailing.

"I wish Lebeau had come to tell me so that I could have gone with him for Stewart," the Indian said.

"Jean, he should be back," Madame Lebeau said. "Mos' all the night he been gone an' where Pere Macungie say he leave Stewart are not so ver' far—twelve—fifteen mile mebbe so."

The missionary stirred in the bunk and arose quietly. Then he saw that Edith was awake, and smiled, but his voice was grave.

"You are feeling better, I know," he said.

She attempted to answer and he held up a warning hand.

"Don't try to talk," he said. "We'll soon have you around and well."

He stopped, listening at the sound of Oowakano's voice, then went into the other room and she heard him speak to the others at the door.

"Hasn't your husband returned?" he asked, and a moment later added, "That is strange and we'd better look into it for this storm isn't through. It's snowing again."

From the forest that dismal wailing of the dog was repeated and it rose to a fierce barking. It seemed

to come from the same spot far up on the hillside and continued, quavering off to renew again and again.

"Something is wrong. That is Stewart's dog," Edith heard the Indian say and then she could see him through the window as he went across the clearing and into the close girdling forest. The missionary followed more slowly as though it required an effort to walk. He hesitated, waiting at the clearing's edge. Minutes passed in silence; then she heard the cry of a man from the forest and the missionary plunged in and was gone.

Edith lay watching, wondering. At last she saw Oowakano reappear and he was running. She heard him call to Madame Lebeau, "It is Stewart and I think he is dead. The great dog guards him."

He was gone around the back of the cabin and brought the sled of the missionary, pulling it himself. Sudden, overwhelming anguish came to the girl in the bunk. She wanted to move, wanted to get up and go out there with those others to bring him in. He was dead and would never know that she understood now—more than that; she might as well confess it to herself for something else had come to her during those days before the crisis when she'd laid there in the bunk, knowing that he was fighting against time, against the wilderness and the storm for her life. She prayed now silently with a fervence

she'd never known before. She'd never dreamed what a prayer could mean! Oh, God! he couldn't die—now! He must live so that she could atone. Every wrong she had done him seemed magnified a thousand fold. All her life from now on she'd devote to helping his fight for these others—but he must live and must know, at least that she understood even if she could never tell him of that other thing which had come to her.

Perhaps she could never atone, but she could throw to his aid every resource, every dollar she had—if he would accept them. He must; he would have to give her that chance. As she lay so quietly now, watching the rim of the forest with eyes that sought to pierce through the maze of depths a great bitterness came toward Rodgers, toward the son as well as the father. They had deluded her and been the cause of all this. She thought of the thing Harold Rodgers had told her of Stewart and Violet Lalonge and she knew without proof that it was a lie. Why didn't Oowakano and the missionary hurry? If she could only get up and go to him!

There was movement at the edge of the woods and Father Macungie appeared, pulling on the traces of the sled. It came out slowly and Oowakano walked beside it, leaning down to hold the body of Stewart on and steady the sled. Close in back came the huge,

gray patched dog, and its fangs were bared as it watched the Indian closely.

Stewart lay face downward. His mackinaw was thrown half over him and where his white shoulder appeared from the torn shirt there were bandages that hung loosely and were red. There was no movement of his body to indicate life. The sled passed beyond her range of vision and Edith heard the heavy movements of the men as they carried him inside.

In the other room Lebeau's child whimpered and there were whisperings. Then Macungie came hurriedly and took a small, waterproof canvas case from the bunk in which he'd slept. Once she heard him ask for warm water, and there were sounds as of cloth being torn. Then a door was opened and she knew by the sounds that they were carrying him into that third room. At last Madame Lebeau came and her face was very grave. She sat on the side of Edith's bunk.

"He ees not dead yet but the bullet ees through hees shoulder an' here ees the deep knife stab." She indicated her breast and shuddered.

Edith's eyes closed and her lips moved slightly as though in prayer.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NEW life was on the forest. In the valleys the catkins had burst and the tufting leaves unfolded their dainty, lace-like edges. There were hints of gorgeous colors to come with the days that were near at hand. The blossoms of the earliest flowering shrubs and bushes were forming into pink and red points. From the river the ice was gone and the last of the snow had melted except in the mountains. There was warmth in the sun that betokened the approaching summer. Among the bushes and in the trees an endless twittering and chirruping was the message of the feathered folk giving voice to the joy that was theirs at this return to the nesting grounds.

At the face of a rocky wall where the hillside had fallen away in a landslip a flock of cliff swallows fluttered about their clustered nests. High over the valleys three whistling swans sped into the north like dark meteors that were late for the fulfillment of nature's edicts. A long tailed chickadee called saucily and the rich fullness of a myrtle warbler answered that life was good. Even the robin chirruped as it looked down on the world of the forest where greens and yellows had come again to cloak creation with new found verdure.

In the bottoms the little streams went tumbling and racing down, carrying off the melted blankets of winter to the lakes and rivers, to swell them with the freshest and coldest of waters. Ouananiche, the salmon, leaped with the sheer joy of living, or, perhaps it was for one of the flies, and occasionally there was a flash and swirl as a trout cleft the waters.

On the rivers the canoes of the trappers, heavily laden with their families, their dogs and furs, went toward the posts for the spring trade. Now there would be dancing and feasting, merry-making throughout the north. The habitual silence of the red men would give way to noisy chattering and games, laughter and happiness, and the patois of the French rivermen and trappers would lend to the babel of ceremonials at the posts.

Spring had come and all life responded eagerly at the touch of its magic. New calves followed the moose and caribou cows in the depths, and in the densest thickets the first fledglings had already burst through the shells in the hidden nests.

There was a warmth in the air that made for comfort and Edith Mason sat before her cabin and looked with unseeing eyes toward the hills. At her side was Violet Lalonge, the daughter of Lalonge, the half-blood trapper, and his Indian wife. There was little that was changed about this girl who was an off-

spring of the wild. She seemed only slightly more matured, possessed of a new poise after that season in the school, down at the city. Slender, dark, the mantle of the city with its civilization had dropped from her and she was much as she had been before, possessed of a wholesome beauty and charm that were appealing.

The Indian girl gazed at her companion steadily. Perhaps she saw something wistful, something that was fighting to surmount the barriers which she also could understand with her woman's instinct. At last her arm rested lightly across the shoulders of Edith Mason and she spoke.

"He is a big man," she said, "bigger than any I have ever known, but he does not understand. No man would. In some things they are all alike, all grown up children. And he is eating his heart out now."

Gently she patted the shoulder of the white woman, then arose and looked at her, smiling.

"You must never let him know of the unclean lies Lemier and Rodgers told you about him and myself. Stewart has meant a great deal to me but not that way, and he'd kill both Rodgers and Lemier if he knew. I'm afraid he might not get over it easily if he thought you'd believed them even—even then. Of course, you couldn't know, then."

Slowly she walked off across the clearing, supple, graceful. Once she turned to look back and was gone into the woods along that trail which led past Stewart's cabin.

Edith Mason saw her go and knew that Stewart had brought her back after that season at the school, to which he had sent her so that she might help him. And Harold Rodgers had tried to poison her mind against him through this clean girl. Stewart had denied and sacrificed here as in so many other things that this girl who was of these people and understood them might be fitted a little better than he could train her to teach their children and make life better for them.

That was what Edith herself had hoped to do and she had failed. Now her thoughts went back as they had so often during these past few weeks. In a reverie, she was living over again that day when they found Stewart and she watched from the bunk where she lay so ill as they brought him in. Oowakano had gone back over the trail with that skill of his kind to learn what had happened.

It was all plain, and he described it from the beginning where Stewart and the missionary parted, the pursuit, Stewart's turning finally and the fight, the approach of the dog from the forest and his onslaught on the antagonist with whom Stewart fought.

Oowakano had even found the knife and there was blood that had frozen on it—Stewart's blood. . . .

Also he had found Lemier and brought him back to the cabin in which MacIntosh lived and there the riverman had recovered at last sufficiently to return downstream. The other one who had been driven off by the dog was not hurt severely. That much was evident, for he had fled back as he had come.

And from MacIntosh she gleaned the information that Lemier had offered him five hundred dollars long before to help in an attempt on Stewart's life. It was that time when Stewart had brought those two over, and she recalled the sarcasm when he had suggested that she sent them. Also from MacIntosh she learned that Harold Rodgers had been at the mills down river a long time without her knowledge. He must have been there just before the attack on Stewart, for Lemier had discussed his presence with MacIntosh.

All these things she thought over now and a tear came to each eye as in memory she lived again those weeks at his cabin when she had fought for his life after her own recovery. It had been a long fight, to cheat death, to hold him here amid that which he loved. Weeks had drawn into months. The knife had sunk deeply and she marveled at the powers of the man who had struggled through that awful blizzard with his shoulder broken by a bullet, unable to

give the wound any attention, and then continued for several miles more, creeping, crawling through the snow with a knife wound in his chest, that indomitable spirit and purpose carrying him on when his physical powers were gone. Readily he'd sacrificed himself for her. She knew all now, for he'd confessed to the missionary that he knew those others were pursuing.

For days on end they'd despaired of his life, but she, barely recovered enough from her own illness to be up, had fought on, fought desperately with the aid of Father Macungie to hold him. It had been weeks before he'd spoken coherently, and then he merely lay there so silent and white and helpless, looking up at her. At last she had talked; sitting on the side of his bunk she had told him that she knew everything. And she told him more. Frankly she admitted that she had been wrong and that she would atone. She would tell all these people that she had been wrong, just as she had told Lebeau and his wife. She would explain that she had been deceived by Rodgers, who was their enemy.

Now a power that was above conscious thoughts seemed luring her toward Stewart. He could not know that she had written to Harold Rodgers telling him that he should have remained at the mills to observe how the plan that she knew must be his had failed. Evidence that was more than circumstantial

and the instinct of woman had served her right there. Nor could Stewart know that her letter to the lumberman's son had contained other things which marked the end of any acquaintanceship between them, even in a business way, and she also threatened legal action at the slightest indication of any further persecution.

But he must know these things now. She must go to him and clear herself in his thoughts. It was unbearable. She arose and went hurriedly toward the trail which led through the forest. She wanted to run toward him. As she reached the trail where the trees and brush arose on each side she stopped suddenly. There was Stewart coming toward her. And he was not yet his old self. He seemed thinner. A moment they looked at each other and she smiled while his face was grave.

"I was coming to—Violet Lalonge told me—she said you didn't believe I understood," Stewart said.

He came to her side.

"I do," he went on, "but I haven't known what to say or do."

She was aware that there was a returning of that fresh, wholesome color to his face. He seemed to be confused, hesitant.

"There's a place that I've always called Olympus," he said. "I haven't been there since—in a long time. I'd like to show it to you."

Willingly she walked beside him along the trail and neither spoke. They crossed the edge of the clearing in which his cabin stood and the great dog came running after them. On the brow of a hill a half dozen game trails converged and they followed one down through the valley and up the steep side of the opposite hill above which the mountains towered high, austere. There was a break in the hillside, the rocks disturbed and disclosing a slight excavation. Stewart stepped aside and pointed. In the excavation a ledge of black, stony appearance was visible amid the rock.

"That is a vein of coal," he said, "and I found another not quite as large on Lalonge's land and two others in the hill back of Lebeau's cabin."

Edith looked in silence, and they went on. Occasionally he helped her where the path was narrow and rough. At last they came to a small flat, a bench-like formation perhaps twenty feet in width and clear of vegetation. Beneath them the slopes fell away deep, thickly grown with forest and the bottoms were attaining the appearance of some ingrained carpeting.

It was a majestic view. For miles on miles into vague distances a great valley spread in front and through it was the silvered thread of a stream, while from the mountainside the waterfall tumbled like a

white veil and the snow-capped mountains were as gigantic pearls above.

Then Stewart pointed over the opposite side of the rocky bench, down a steep slope of the mountain where the brush grew thin and a small stream found its way through a rocky gorge.

"Down there I found gold," he said, "not much, but enough to help, and I'd have been able to get a great deal more out if there had been time."

The girl lifted a finger to his lips and smiled.

"Don't talk of gold now," she said. "There won't be any more worries of that kind. I fought against you because I did not understand. But now I can atone. Rodgers may think he is not yet beaten and every power I have, every dollar, will be opposed to him. It will be easier because I understand him and his methods now."

He led her back to the opposite side of the flat and they sat down on a stone together and looked out on this interminable magnificence of nature. From a ridge below where the hardwood grew sparsely came a sound, pulsing, soft, liquid gold, most wondrous of all sounds as the hermit thrush offered his cadence of adulation for the deities of the wild.

To the girl sitting there came a tingling thrill, as though the spirit of the infinite had revealed itself. Her hand was in that of Stewart and she did not

withdraw it. Far below was an open glade and she saw that two figures appeared in it, walking close together. She looked at Stewart and smiled.

"Oowakana and Violet Lalonge have found the valley of content," he said.

There was silence for a moment while they looked toward the Indian couple.

"I have changed," Edith said at last, "and I've learned. When I first came here it would have seemed unthinkable to me that she who is one-fourth white could marry him, an Indian. Now I would be very sad if anything happened to interfere with their happiness."

Stewart's eyes had a distant look.

"How infinitely superior Oowakano is to a white man like Jackson was," he said, and it was as though he mused aloud.

"Jackson?" the girl asked.

Stewart looked at her and smiled.

"Yes; you didn't know him. He was the father of that child Netawis is raising, the little fellow who came to you for a while to be taught."

Edith nodded.

"Yes, I remember. I had wondered why he stopped coming. I blamed you for that. I thought you had merely made them send him to me to show me you could and then stopped it."

"Netawis lives fully three miles up the river and he was afraid to let the little fellow come that far," Stewart said. "In most ways they are awfully careful of their children and they think as much of adopted ones as of their own. But he's promised that if I'll let him keep the child he'll build a new cabin nearer here this summer. It would be a fine thing if some day that boy could go out from here to better schools than we'll ever have, even to college. I feel a great responsibility for him myself since I drove his father away in order to give him a chance in life."

"I blamed you for that, too," the girl said, "but later I learned the whole story. I was very blind and it took a long while for my eyes to open."

Stewart pressed her hand slightly tighter. In the thin, pure air high above a dot appeared, and another. Like great frigates of the sky lanes the eagles came back to the nest on the face of the steep cliff far up the mountainside.

"I used to wonder whether I was merely a dreamer and a fool," Stewart said slowly. "It seemed that the things I wanted to do were too big for the others to understand, though they appeared easy enough to me. I wondered why others opposed me and then there came a time when it looked hopeless, when I thought that you were deliberately weaning away the confidence of my people from me. I had to fight

against those I was fighting for as well as Rodgers and his influence. I used to laugh a little bitterly at myself, for there was nothing that I wanted to gain out of it, personally. I wanted the chance to do what I saw I could do for these people, those who are white and those who are red, alike. It makes no difference. Now I'll have the chance. It may take a long time and be a slow development but, at least, I'm sure they'll keep that which belongs to them or get something like its real value. There probably won't be any great oil gushers or vast coal or gold fields developed in this northwest for years to come, but there are minerals, these mountains and hills have a wealth of them. It was to learn about them that I went down to the States to college and studied mining, and it'll be a life work to develop them."

He stopped and looked at the girl, then went on.

"That in itself ought to be reward enough, but there's something greater, the greatest reward of all."

For answer Edith Mason drew his face down and kissed him.

Over the forest the song of the hermit thrush seemed the soft echoes of celestial music.

THE END

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading. Why not then own the books of great novelists when the price is so small

¶ *Of all the amusements which can possibly be imagined for a hard-working man, after his daily toil, or in its intervals, there is nothing like reading an entertaining book. It calls for no bodily exertion. It transports him into a livelier, and gayer, and more diversified and interesting scene, and while he enjoys himself there he may forget the evils of the present moment. Nay, it accompanies him to his next day's work, and gives him something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of his every-day occupation—something he can enjoy while absent, and look forward with pleasure to return to.*

Ask your dealer for a list of the titles in Burt's Popular Priced Fiction

In buying the books bearing the A. L. Burt Company imprint you are assured of wholesome, entertaining and instructive reading

Harbor Road, The. Sara Ware Bassett.
Harriet and the Piper. Kathleen Norris.
Havoc. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Head of the House of Coombe, The. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
Heart of the Desert, The. Honoré Willsie.
Heart of the Hills, The. John Fox, Jr.
Heart of the Range, The. William Patterson White.
Heart of the Sunset. Rex Beach.
Heart of Unaga, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Helen of the Old House. Harold Bell Wright.
Hidden Places, The. Bertrand W. Sinclair.
Hidden Trails. William Patterson White.
Hillman, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Hira Singh. Talbot Mundy.
His Last Bow. A. Conan Doyle.
His Official Fiancee. Berta Ruck.
Homeland. Margaret Hill McCarter.
Homestead Ranch. Elizabeth G. Young.
Honor of the Big Snows. James Oliver Curwood.
Hopalong Cassidy. Clarence E. Mulford.
Hound from the North, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
House of the Whispering Pines, The. Anna Katharine Green
Humoresque. Fannie Hurst.
Illustrious Prince, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
In Another Girl's Shoes. Berta Ruck.
Indifference of Juliet, The. Grace S. Richmond.
Infelice. Augusta Evans Wilson.
Initials Only. Anna Katharine Green.
Innocent. Marie Corelli.
Innocent Adventuress, The. Mary Hastings Bradley.
Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu, The. Sax Rohmer.
In the Brooding Wild. Ridgwell Cullum.
In the Onyx Lobby. Carolyn Wells.
Iron Trail, The. Rex Beach.
Iron Woman, The. Margaret Deland.
Ishmael. (Ill.) Mrs. Southworth.
Isle of Retribution. Edison Marshall.
I've Married Marjorie. Margaret Widdemer.
Ivory Trail, The. Talbot Mundy.
Jacob's Ladder. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Jean of the Lazy A. B. M. Bower.
Jeanne of the Marshes. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Jeeves. P. G. Wodehouse.

Jimmie Dale and the Phantom Clew. Frank L. Packard.
Johnny Nelson. Clarence E. Mulford.
Joseph Greer and His Daughter. Henry Kitchell Webster.
Judith of the Godless Valley. Honoré Willsie.
Keeper of the Door, The. Ethel M. Dell.
Keith of the Border. Randall Parrish.
Kent Knowles: Quahaug. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Kilmeny of the Orchard. L. M. Montgomery.
Kingdom of the Blind, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
King of Kearsarge. Arthur O. Friel.
King of the Khyber Rifles. Talbot Mundy.
King Spruce. Holman Day.
Knave of Diamonds, The. Ethel M. Dell.
Land-Girl's Love Story, A. Berta Ruck.
Land of Strong Men, The. A. M. Chisholm.
Laramie Holds the Range. Frank H. Spearman.
Last Trail, The. Zane Grey.
Laughing Bill Hyde. Rex Beach.
Laughing Girl, The. Robert W. Chambers.
Law Breakers, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Law of the Gun, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Leavenworth Case, The. Anna Katherine Green. (Photoplay Edition).
Light That Failed, The. Rudyard Kipling. (Photoplay Ed.).
Lighted Way, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Lin McLean. Owen Wister.
Lister's Great Adventure. Harold Bindloss.
Little Moment of Happiness, The. Clarence Budington Kelland.
Little Red Foot, The. Robert W. Chambers.
Little Warrior, The. Pelham Grenville Wodehouse.
Lonely Warrior, The. Claude C. Washburn.
Lonesome Land. B. M. Bower.
Lone Wolf, The. Louis Joseph Vance.
Long Live the King. Mary Roberts Rinehart. (Photoplay Edition).
Lost Ambassador. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Lost Discovery, The. Baillie Reynolds.
Lost Prince, The. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
Lost World, The. A. Conan Doyle.
Luck of the Kid, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Lucretia Lombard, Kathleen Norris.
Luminous Face, The. Carolyn Wells.
Lydia of the Pines. Honoré Willsie.

Mystery of the Hasty Arrow, The. Anna K. Green.
Mystery of the Silver Dagger, The. Randall Parrish.
Nameless River. Vingie E. Roe.
Ne'er-Do-Well, The. Rex Beach. (Photoplay Ed.).
Net, The. Rex Beach.
Never Fail Blake. Arthur Stringer.
Next Corner, The. Kate Jordan.
Nightfall. Anthony Pryde.
Night Horseman, The. Max Brand.
Night of the Wedding, The. C. N. and A. M. Williamson.
Night Operator, The. Frank L. Packard.
Night Riders, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Nine Unknown, The. Talbot Mundy.
Nobody's Man. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
No Defence. Gilbert Parker.
North. James B. Hendryx.
Obstacle Race, The. Ethel M. Dell.
Odds. Ethel M. Dell.
Old Misery. Hugh Pendexter.
Omoo. Herman Melville.
One Thing Is Certain. Sophie Kerr.
One-Way Trail, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Ordeal of Honor, An. Anthony Pryde.
Outlaw, The. Jackson Gregory.
Owner of the Lazy D. William Patterson White.
Panelled Room, The. Rupert Sargent Holland.
Paradise Bend. William Patterson White.
Pardners. Rex Beach.
Partners of the Tide. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Patricia Brent, Spinster. Anonymous.
Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail, The. Ralph Connor.
Paul Anthony, Christian. Hiram W. Hayes.
Pawned. Frank L. Packard.
Pawns Count, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Pay Gravel. Hugh Pendexter.
Peacemakers, The. Hiram W. Hayes.
Peregrine's Progress. Jeffery Farnoll.
Peter Ruff and the Double Four. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Phantom Wires. Arthur Stringer.
Pointed Tower, The. Vance Thompson.
Pollyanna; "The Glad Book." Eleanor H. Porter. (Lim. Ed.)
Trade Mark—Trade-Mark.
Poor Man's Rock. Bertrand W. Sinclair.
Poor Wise Man, A. Mary Roberts Rinehart.

Poisoned Paradise, The. Robert W. Service. (Photoplay Ed.).
Portygee, The. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Possession. Olive Wadsley.
Postmaster, The. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Prairie Child, The. Arthur Stringer.
Prairie Flowers. James B. Hendryx.
Prairie Mother, The. Arthur Stringer.
Prairie Wife, The. Arthur Stringer.
Pretender, The. Robert W. Service.
Prince of Sinners, A. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Prodigal Daughters, The. Joseph Hocking. (Photoplay Ed.).
Prodigal Son. Hall Caine. (Photoplay Ed.).
Profiteers, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Promise, The. J. B. Hendryx.
Public Square, The. Will Levington Comfort.
Purple Mask, The. Louise Jordan Miln.
Purple Pearl, The. Anthony Pryde.
Quemado. William West Winter.
Quest of the Sacred Slipper, The. Sax Rohmer.
Quill's Window. George Barr McCutcheon.
Rainbow's End, The. Rex Beach.
Rainbow Valley. L. M. Montgomery.
Ramshackle House. Hulbert Footner.
Ranch at the Wolverine, The. B. M. Bower.
Ranching for Sylvia. Harold Bindloss.
Rangy Pete. Guy Morton.
Raspberry Jam. Carolyn Wells.
Reclaimers, The. Margaret Hill McCarter.
Re-Creation of Brian Kent, The. Harold Bell Wright.
Red and Black. Grace S. Richmond.
Red Pepper Burns. Grace S. Richmond.
Red Pepper's Patients. Grace S. Richmond.
Red Seal, The. Natalie Sumner Lincoln.
Restless Sex, The. Robert W. Chambers.
Return of Dr. Fu-Manchu, The. Sax Rohmer.
Return of Frank Clamart, The. Henry C. Rowland.
Return of Tarzan The. Edgar Rice Burroughs.
Riddle of the Frozen Flame The. M. E. and T. W. Hanshew.
Riddle of the Mysterious Light The. M. E. and T. W. Hanshew.
Riddle of the Purple Emperor The. M. E. and T. W. Hanshew.
Riddle of the Spinning Wheel, The. M. E. and T. W. Hanshew.

Rider of the Golden Bar, The. William Patterson White.
Rider of the King Log, The. Holman Day.
Rider o' the Stars. R. J. Horton.
Riders of the Silences. John Frederick.
Rilla of Ingleside. L. M. Montgomery.
Rimrock Trail. J. Allan Dunn.
Rise of Roscoe Paine, The. Joseph C. Lincoln.
River Trail, The. Laurie Y. Erskine.
Robin. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
Rocks of Valpre, The. Ethel M. Dell.
Rogues of the North. Albert M. Treynor.
Romance of a Million Dollars, The. Elizabeth Dejeans.
Rosa Mundi. Ethel M. Dell.
Rose of Santa Fe, The. Edwin L. Sabin.
Round the Corner in Gay Street. Grace S. Richmond.
Round-Up, The. Oscar J. Friend.
Rung Ho! Talbot Mundy.
Rustler of Wind River, The. G. W. Ogden.
St. Elmo. (Ill. Ed.) Augusta J. Evans.
Sand. Olive Wadsley.
Scarlet Iris, The. Vance Thompson.
Scattergood Baines. Clarence Budington Kelland.
Second Violin, The. Grace S. Richmond.
Secret Power, The. Marie Corelli.
Self-Raised. (Ill). Mrs. Southworth.
Settling of the Sage. Hal G. Evarts.
Seven Ages of Woman, The. Compton Mackenzie.
Seven Darlings, The. Gouverneur Morris.
Seventh Man, The. Max Brand.
Shadow of the East, The. E. M. Hull. (Photoplay Ed.).
Shadow on the Glass, The. Charles J. Dutton.
Shavings. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Sheik, The. E. M. Hull.
Sheila of Big Wreck Cove. James H. Cooper.
Shepherd of the Hills, The. Harold Bell Wright.
Shepherds of the Wild. Edison Marshall.
Sheriff of Dyke Hole, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Sherry. George Barr McCutcheon.
Shoe-Bar Stratton. Joseph B. Ames.
Sight Unseen, and The Confession. Mary Roberts Rinehart.
Silver Horde, The. Rex Beach.
Silver Poppy, The. Arthur Stringer.
Singing Bone, The. R. Austin Freeman.
Singing Wells, The. Roland Pertwee.

Sinister Mark, The. Lee Thayer.
Sin That Was His, The. Frank L. Packard.
Sir or Madam. Berta Ruck.
Sisters-in-Law. Gertrude Atherton.
Sky Line of Spruce. Edison Marshall.
Slayer of Souls, The. Robert W. Chambers.
Smiles: A Rose of the Cumberlands. Eliot H. Robinson.
Snowdrift. James B. Hendryx.
Snowshoe Trail, The. Edison Marshall.
Son of His Father, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Son of Tarzan, The. Edgar Rice Burroughs.
Souls for Sale. Rupert Hughes. (Photoplay Ed.).
Speckled Bird, A. Augusta Evans Wilson.
Spirit of the Border, The. Zane Grey. (New Edition).
Spirit-of-Iron. Harwood Steele.
Spoilers, The. Rex Beach. (Photoplay Ed.).
Spoilers of the Valley, The. Robert Watson.
Star Dust. Fannie Hurst.
Steele of the Royal Mounted. James Oliver Curwood.
Step on the Stair, The. Anna Katherine Green.
Still Jim. Honoré Willsie.
Story of Foss River Ranch, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Story of Marco, The. Eleanor H. Porter.
Strange Case of Cavendish, The. Randall Parrish.
Strawberry Acres. Grace S. Richmond.
Strength of the Pines, The. Edison Marshall.
Subconscious Courtship, The. Berta Ruck.
Substitute Millionaire, The. Hulbert Footner.
Sudden Jim. Clarence B. Kelland.
Sweethearts Unmet. Berta Ruck.
Sweet Stranger. Berta Ruck.
Tales of Chinatown. Sax Rohmer.
Tales of Secret Egypt. Sax Rohmer.
Tales of Sherlock Holmes. A. Conan Doyle.
Talkers, The. Robert W. Chambers.
Talisman, The. Sir Walter Scott. (Photoplay Ed.). Screened as Richard the Lion Hearted.
Taming of Zenas Henry, The. Sara Ware Basset.
Tarzan of the Apes. Edgar Rice Burroughs.
Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar. Edgar Rice Burroughs.
Tattooed Arm, The. Isabel Ostrander.
Tempting of Tavernake, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Thomas Hardy. (Photoplay Ed.).
Tex. Clarence E. Mulford.

Texan, The. James B. Hendryx.
Thankful's Inheritance. Joseph C. Lincoln.
That Affair at "The Cedars." Lee Thayer.
That Printer of Udell's. Harold Bell Wright.
Their Yesterdays. Harold Bell Wright.
Thief of Bagdad, The. Achmed Abdullah. (Photoplay Ed.)
Thieves' Wit. Hulbert Footner.
Thirteenth Commandment, The. Rupert Hughes.
This Side of Paradise. F. Scott Fitzgerald.
Thoroughbred, The. Henry Kitchell Webster.
Thread of Flame, The. Basil King.
Three Black Bags. Marion Polk Angelloti.
Three Men and a Maid. P. G. Wodehouse.
Three Musketeers, The. Alexander Dumas.
Three of Hearts, The. Berta Ruck.
Through the Shadows with O. Henry. Al. Jennings.
Thunderbolt, The. Clyde Perrin.
Timber. Harold Titus.
Timber Pirate. Charles Christopher Jenkins.
Tish. Mary Roberts Rinehart.
To Him That Hath. Ralph Connor.
Toilers of the Sea, The. Victor Hugo. (Photoplay Ed.).
Toll of the Sands. Paul Delaney.
Trail of the Axe, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Trailin'. Max Brand.
Trail to Yesterday, The. Chas. A. Seltzer.
Treasure of Heaven, The. Marie Corelli.
Trigger of Conscience, The. Robert Orr Chipperfield.
Triumph of John Kars, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel, The. Baroness Orczy.
Trodden Gold. Howard Vincent O'Brien.
Trooper O'Neill. George Goodchild.
Trouble at the Pinelands, The. Ernest M. Porter.
T. Tembarom. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
Tumbleweeds. Hal G. Evarts.
Turn of the Tide. Eleanor H. Porter.
Twenty-fourth of June. Grace S. Richmond.
Twins of Suffering Creek, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Two-Gun Man, The. Chas. A. Seltzer.
Two-Gun Man, The. Robert Ames Bennet.
Two-Gun Sue. Douglas Grant.
Typee. Herman Melville.
Tyrrel of the Cow Country. Robert Ames Bennet.
Under Handicap. Jackson Gregory.

Under the Country Sky. Grace S. Richmond.
Uneasy Street. Arthur Somers Roche.
Unlatched Door, The. Lee Thayer.
Unpardonable Sin, The. Major Rupert Hughes.
Unseen Ear, The. Natalie Sumner Lincoln.
Untamed, The. Max Brand.
Up and Coming. Nalbro Bartley.
Up From Slavery. Booker T. Washington.
Ursula Trent. W. L. George.

Valiants of Virginia, The. Hallie Erminie Rives.
Valley of Content, The. Blanche Upright.
Valley of Fear, The. Sir A. Conan Doyle.
Valley of Gold, The. David Howarth.
Valley of the Sun, The. William M. McCoy.
Vandemark's Folly. Herbert Quick.
Vanguards of the Plains. Margaret Hill McCarter.
Vanished Messenger, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
Vanishing of Betty Varian, The. Carolyn Wells.
Vanity Fair. Wm. M. Thackeray. (Photoplay Ed.).
Vashti. Augusta Evans Wilson.
Viola Gwyn. George Barr McCutcheon.
Virginia of Elk Creek Valley. Mary Ellen Chase.
Virtuous Wives. Owen Johnson.
Voice of the Pack, The. Edison Marshall.

Wagon Wheel, The. William Patterson White.
Wall Between, The. Sara Ware Bassett.
Wall of Men, A. Margaret Hill McCarter.
Wasted Generation, The. Owen Johnson.
Watchers of the Plains, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Way of an Eagle, The. Ethel M. Dell.
Way of the Strong, The. Ridgwell Cullum.
Way of These Women, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.
We Can't Have Everything. Major Rupert Hughes.
Weavers, The. Gilbert Parker.
West Broadway. Nina Wilcox Putnam.
West Wind Drift. George Barr McCutcheon.
What's the World Coming To? Rupert Hughes.
What Will People Say? Rupert Hughes.
Wheels Within Wheels. Carolyn Wells.
Whelps of the Wolf, The. George Marsh.
When a Man's a Man. Harold Bell Wright. (Photoplay Ed.).
When Egypt Went Broke. Holman Day.
Where the Sun Swings North. Barnett Willoughby.
Where There's a Will. Mary Roberts Rinehart.

Whispering Sage. Henry Sinclair Drago and Joseph Noel
White Jacket. Herman Melville.
White Moll, The. Frank L. Packard.
Why Not. Margaret Widdemer.
Window at the White Cat, The. Mary Roberts Rinehart.
Winds of Chance, The. Rex Beach.
Winds of the World, The. Talbot Mundy.
Wine of Life, The. Arthur Stringer.
Winning of Barbara Worth, The. Harold Bell Wright.
Winning the Wilderness. Margaret Hill McCarter.
Wire Devils, The. Frank L. Packard.
Wire Tappers, The. Arthur Stringer.
Wishing Ring Man, The. Margaret Widdemer.
With Juliet in England. Grace S. Richmond.
Within These Walls. Rupert Hughes.
Wolfville. Alfred Henry Lewis.
Woman from "Outside," The. Hulbert Footner.
Woman Gives, The. Owen Johnson.
Woman Haters, The. Joseph C. Lincoln.
Woman of Knockaloe, The. Hall Caine.
Woman Thou Gavest Me, The. Hall Caine.
Woodcarver of 'Lympus, The. Mary E. Waller.
Wooing of Rosamond Fayre, The. Berta Ruck.
Wrong Mr. Right, The. Berta Ruck.

Year of Delight. Margaret Widdemer.
Years for Rachel, The. Berta Ruck.
Yellow Claw, The. Sax Rohmer.
Yellow Horde, The. Hal G. Evarts.
You're Only Young Once. Margaret Widdemer.

Zeppelin's Passenger, The. E. Phillips Oppenheim.